For Professional And Amateur Guitarists

# Guitar PLAYER®

April 1980
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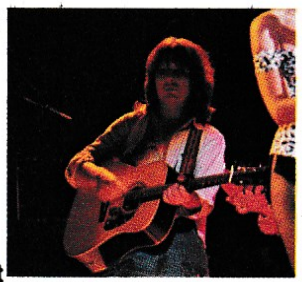

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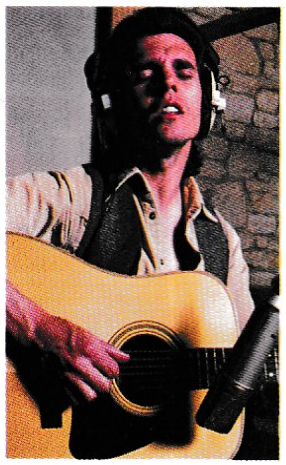

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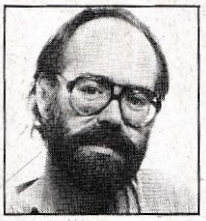

# FROM THE PUBLISHER

COVERS—NASTY LITTLE things, those. Egos—even nastier at times. And when the two come together, the life of an editor can shorten a bit.

It's almost a weekly occurence at *Guitar Player*. An artist's or group's manager calls suggesting an interview with the guitarist they represent. Sometimes it even involves an artist our readers really care about. Sometimes it doesn't. "But it's got to be a cover, of course," the voice on the other end asserts, and we're off and running in the cover-story sweepstakes.

Don Menn, our editor, then tries to explain the rules, politely: We never promise a cover in advance of the actual interview. And naturally the artist has to be one that the staff can respect for his or her artistic merit, historical significance, or popular appeal. Plus, it has to be someone in whom our readers have expressed substantial interest. Certainly, the subject has to have drawing power, too. Now assuming that the player qualifies, the interview itself must live up to its billing: No matter how popular the performer is, if we get a lifeless, uninformative interview—no cover. We just won't compromise our readers merely to benefit from greater impulse buying. (We never know ahead of time whether the conversation will be up to par, and this simple fact is the reason we can't guarantee a cover story in the first place.)

And then there's the matter of the photo. Simply stated, if it stinks—again, no cover. If the colors are too bland—no cover. If it doesn't fit our graphics format—no cover. If the group's manager says that the whole band has to be in the photo—drummers, singers, etc.—you guessed it, no cover. Sometimes an otherwise terrific shot won't qualify because the guitar doesn't show, or there's a microphone in front of the artist's face, or there's not enough room on the left side of the negative for the copy. (Last year one cover subject's first choice was a face shot—from the neck up! He loved it. We didn't.)

But let's say the artist is one we've been looking for, and the interview is solid. Probably a third of the time we then enter the Now-that-I'm-on-the-cover-let-me-pick-the-photo stage. This, though, is another *GP* no-no. As long as we're the ones publishing the magazine, we're the ones who pick the shot. "But so-and-so hates to have his double chin exposed."

*Continued on page 104*

A GPI Publication

# Guitar PLAYER

Vol. 14, No. 4 April 1980

**The Magazine For Professional And Amateur Guitarists**





Cover photo by Neil Zlozower

**Other GPI magazines: Frets, Roger Siminoff, Editor • Contemporary Keyboard, Tom Darter, Editor**

**GUITAR PLAYER** (ISSN 0017-5463) is published monthly by GPI Publications, which also issues *Contemporary Keyboard* and *Frets* magazines.  Second-class postage paid at Cupertino, California, and additional mailing offices. Canadian postage paid at Winnipeg, Manitoba. **POSTMASTER:** Please send form 3579 to P.O. Box 28836, San Diego, CA 92127. **EDITORIAL AND EXECUTIVE OFFICES:** 20605 Lazaneo, Cupertino, CA 95014; (408) 446-1105. Publisher assumes no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts, photographs, or artwork. **SUBSCRIPTIONS:** $18 per year. Outside U.S. and Canada, $23. Address all subscription correspondence to P.O. Box 28836, San Diego, CA 92127. Allow 7-9 weeks for new subscriptions or change of address. Send mailing label plus old and new addresses for address changes.

# LETTERS

## Send To: Guitar Player

## 20605 Lazaneo, Cupertino, CA 95014

I thought the article on Arvella Gray in the February '80 issue was truly amazing. I always thought that the only way anyone could ever have an article written about them in *Guitar Player* would be if they were a very wealthy or prominent musician who has mastered the instrument. However, after reading the article on Arvella Gray, he meets none of these qualifications, and I see that I was totally wrong in my thinking. I hope to see more articles like this in future issues and can only say it's a shame you couldn't put him on the cover, because he truly deserves it.

Jonathon P. Irace
Rocky Hill, CT

I was pleased about the story. It sound like I said it.

Arvella Gray
Chicago, IL

What a surprising honor and thrill it was for me to see my name printed there, a write-in squeaker, in your readership poll [*Ed. Note: As announced in the December '79 issue, Emmett, lead guitarist with Triumph, placed fifth in the Best New Talent category*]. I thought of all the *GP* faithfuls, the woodshedders, the unknown dreamers and believers, and I wanted to let them know: A little dreaming and believing has come true for me here, and it's inspiring, reassuring, and breeds a fraternal sense. Recognition by your peers is the best recognition of all! All my labors of love—past, present, and future—all the touring, the personal trials and tribulations, the reviews and the interviews: That compliment in this magazine from its readers really makes it worthwhile. It really does mean something. Unknowns—please relate and be motivated. Many thanks to you all.

Rik Emmett
Mississauga, Ontario, Canada

This concerns a reader's question on the Fender Princeton amp's frequency response [Oct. '79]. We have had success with Princetons by installing inexpensive high-frequency horns purchased from Radio Shack (part #40-1228). The horn can be either vertically or horizontally mounted, and the output from the Princeton (12 watts) will not damage the high-frequency driver when connected according to manufacturer's instructions.

Michael Alex
Shadowfax
Whitestone, NY

A problem facing many electric guitarists is that of changing volume quickly, accurately, and easily. My solution has been to install a volume control bypass switch on my guitar. A double-pole double-throw switch is all that was needed. The signal from the pickups can go through the volume control at any preset level, or go straight to the amplifier at full volume. The contrast between the levels can be very easily adjusted. With the volume control switched on, the guitar behaves exactly as it did before the modification, so that no playing technique need be changed. The presence of the switch allows additional dynamic control that is especially useful when changing between lead and rhythm.

Ron Goldberg
Davis, CA

I just wanted to say that the article on Monnette Sudler [Feb. '80] was refreshing. Being a female guitarist, I related to the line, "We don't like to hire ladies in the band because they cause difficulties." In the long run, who really causes the difficulties? Thanks to human beings and hard practice, a female guitarist *can* make it.

Susan Brna
Somers Point, NJ

I really enjoyed the feature on Tommy Tedesco in the February '80 issue. With everything else so thorough in that profile, I just had to rummage through my collection to find that "Tedesco & Pitman" instrumental that was on the flip side of a Phil Spector hit Tedesco himself couldn't recall. Well, the hit side was "Be My Baby," the Ronettes' hit on Phil Spector's own Philles Records label. I've been long amazed at how prolific studio players like Tedesco and some others have been, and this feature showed me that they're even more so than I'd imagined. The amazing thing is that the quality of their music remains so high nonetheless.

Jim Forkan
Bayside, NY

I was reading through some back issues when I came across an article by Jeff Baxter in the September '76 issue in which he asked for suggestions for preventing guitar thefts. I'm no genius, and this idea seemed far-fetched at first, but the more I thought about it, the less crazy it seemed: a key to turn on your electric guitar. Like with cars, you'd have professional thieves finding some way around it, but it would probably deter most thefts by amateurs.

Gregory Vega

*Continued on page 102*


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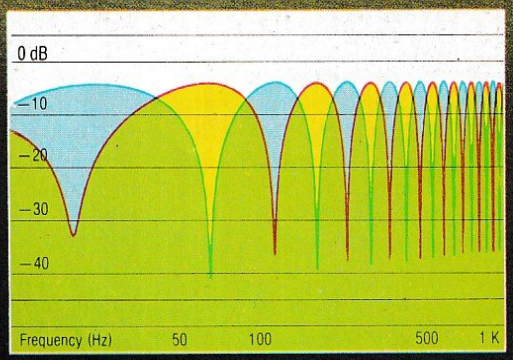


The new MXR Stereo Chorus stands alone among conventional chorus devices. Its unique design and sound almost defy description.

The Stereo Chorus utilizes advanced time delay circuitry providing a doubling effect for voices and instruments; one voice will sound like two singing in unison, two like four. As in nature, the voices can vary subtly in pitch. What you get is a natural choral effect. It can be used to thicken the sound, so that six-string guitars sound like twelve-strings. Through the introduction of extreme pitch bending, the Stereo Chorus will produce an intense vibrato, normally unattainable.

Not only is the Stereo Chorus musical and versatile, it also provides a means of achieving realistic stereo enhancement. We've included two outputs with complimentary notches and peaks in the frequency spectrum. The exact frequencies which are notched in one channel are boosted in the other. The graph shown is an actual response plot of the two outputs, wnich illustrates this concept. The Stereo Chorus transforms tones, harmonics and sounds into a lush and shimmering musical environment which surrounds the listener. This differs from similar devices which have one processed output, and one dry output. The Stereo Chorus provides a true stereo image which sounds more vibrant and alive than conventional chorus effects.

The manual control varies the delay time; a width control determines the amount of sweep; and a speed control adjusts the rate at which the delay is swept. A bypass switch provides noiseless accessibility to the dry signal in both outputs.

The MXR Stereo Chorus is equally geared for the studio or the road. We've included an internal switch which allows the selection of instrument or line level at both the input and output. Its high input impedance reduces the effects of loading when using long lines or other effects devices. Its low output impedance allows you to drive long lines and any other equipment. Superior circuit design has enabled us to maintain a wide bandwidth and dynamic range, ensuring signal fidelity.

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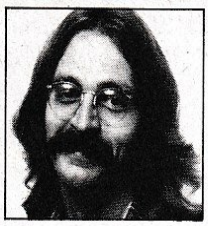

# JAS OBRECHT
# PRO'S REPLY
## George Gobel

LONESOME GEORGE GOBEL saw his first daylight on May 20, 1919. As a child he aspired to be a professional baseball player, but in his early teens he joined a group of C&W entertainers on radio station WLS in Chicago and learned to play guitar. He soon recorded his first song for the Sears Conqueror label, "A Cowboy's Best Friend Is His Horse" [out of print], on which he was accompanied by Gene Autry. During his Air Force days George introduced comedy into his routine for the first time as he entertained fellow servicemen. After the War he played small clubs, hotels, and county fairs, using his humor, guitar, and crew-cut good looks to win the hearts of his audiences.

From 1954 until 1957, *The George Gobel Show* was one of the top half-hour TV comedy programs, with George regularly delivering lines like, "Did you ever feel as if the whole world was a tuxedo and you were a pair of brown shoes?" Later in the decade he shared a comedy series with Jack Benny. In 1959 Gibson unveiled the L-5 CT hollowbody electric guitar, which, due to his frequent appearances with the instrument, has ever since been commonly known as the George Gobel model. (Next month's Rare Bird column will profile one of these beauties.) Since 1966 George has been a regular on *Hollywood Squares* and other TV shows, and he's made numerous commercials, some with guitar in hand.

* * * *

*What made you trade your baseball bat for a guitar?*

Well, I started out singing in the church choir; I was a boy soprano. Then I started singing on WLS in Chicago, and at that time it was like the Nashville of today—the *National Barn Dance Show*—and everybody played guitar. And it was like there was always a guitar around and always somebody, as they used to say in those days, not to teach you, but to "show you some of the *holts*." They meant "holds"—in other words, chords. You know, "This is a *G* holt," and so on. Then after I started playing a little bit and just learning like with open strings, a guy named Jimmy Atkins[*GP*, Sept. '76], who was Chet Atkins [Oct. '79] brother, started showing me how to barre and play in all keys without a capo. Now this is going back some 35 or 40 years or more, and the guitar was mainly a rhythm instrument at that time. Very few people played lead or take-off or anything, and when you found somebody like that, it was just amazing that they could play

"Twelfth-Street Rag" or "Nola." But I was basically a singer, so I never really got into that end of it. In other words, I'm not the world's greatest guitar player—maybe not even second! About a millionth, maybe.

*Were there many guitar heroes back then?*

My own personal heroes, yeah. I didn't know any of the guys like Eddie Lang [Oct. '78] or people like that, but there was a fellow named Slim Bryant who was very well thought of, and geez, he could really play. And then there was a guy came with Rube Tronson's Texas Cowboys—and Rube Tronson's Texas Cowboys were from Wisconsin, incidentally. This guy's name was Rhubarb Red, the yodelling kid from Waukesha. He's better known as Les Paul [Dec. '77]. I go way back with him.

*How did a Gibson electric guitar come to be known as the George Gobel model?*

Well, that's kind of a long story. It's not officially a George Gobel model. A friend of mine, Andy Nelson, was working for Gibson at that time and they'd just come out with this guitar. Andy only had one, and he said, "Why don't you try it?" It was an L-5, but it's real thin and shorter. I'm not that much of an expert on guitars. But it was different, and I had the guitar for like eight or ten months and got to liking it. So then I said, "Gee, I really like this guitar. I'd like for you to get one for me." He said, "Let me see what I can do for you." I kept that one and he brought me another one and asked if they could take a picture and if I would have any objection to them using my name. So I said, "No, but I don't think that it's going to mean much among guitar players because in my act I play about two songs, two chords, and I don't see what good it's going to do you." And he says, "Well, they seem to think so.

*Continued*

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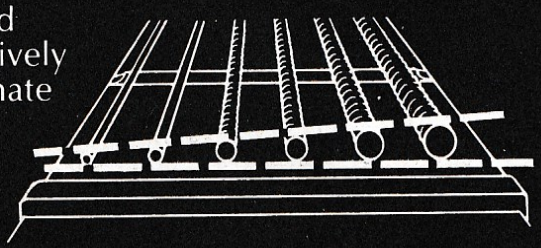
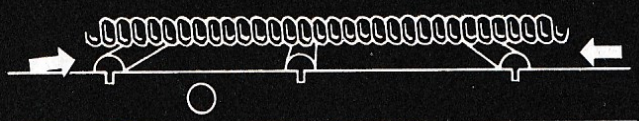
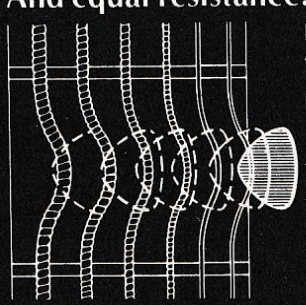


**So they offer the lowest possible playing action.** Because they can be adjusted to sit closer to the frets. And that makes them easier to play.

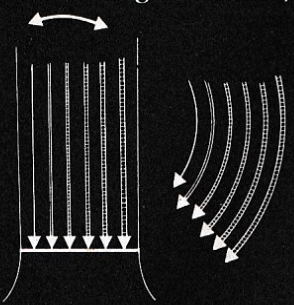


**And equal resistance.** Since Equa offers uniform resistance, "bending" chords is no longer a chore.

And you can play faster. Neither your fingers, nor your pick, will get hung up on an uneven string.



**That means neck twist is no longer a worry.** Uneven pull on guitar strings sometimes causes the neck to twist out of shape. Equa balanced strings will help you avoid that problem.



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## GEORGE GOBEL

Somebody up there likes you, and he'd just like you to have a Gibson." And I said, "Boy, that would be super!" That's the way it came out. It was no big thing where they came chasing me with a contract or anything like that.

*Do you play very often today?*

No, not like I should. I do about one or two songs in my nightclub act, but I'm doing less and less of that. But I've still got that original one. And I've also got an old Gibson Super 400 that they've refinished in red—just like my L-5—and people are pretty much in awe of the old 400. I don't know if this is a coincidence or the reason why they call it the Super 400, but in those days it cost $400 in stores, and that was a fabulous amount.

*How would you describe your technique?*

Oh, nil! I've got soft fingers. At one time I was respectable as a rhythm guitar player—let's put it that way. Just barely respectable, but that didn't take any of the fun away from it. I enjoyed playing just as much as if I knew what I was doing. I've always enjoyed playing, and I enjoy playing with real good players. My kind of thing was playing rhythm—"Tea For Two," "Rose Room" in A♭, and those kinds of things. I was never a great technician.

*Do you have any favorite guitarists today?*

Oh, gee—that's a little unfair. There are so many. I still think Les Paul plays as good as most of them. Of course, Chet, Roy Clark [Nov. '78]. All of these people are friends of mine, and if I left somebody out, they'd say, "How come he didn't think of me?" There are so many—Laurindo Almeida [Aug. '68], Segovia [June '78]. There's no end to the list of good players now. And some of them in the more modern groups, I don't even know their names. My son Gregg will say, "This is so and so," and I'll say, "Well, you ought to have heard Charlie Byrd [Oct. '74] when he played for Bing Crosby." It's a really tough thing to do. It's like arguing about the difference between Joe Louis and Muhammed Ali—they're all great in their era and their time, and they are all great at what they do.

*Can you listen to rock and roll?*

Yeah. I'm not overly fond of it; I can't understand the words half of the time. But I like all kinds of music. The only thing that I resent about rock and roll or disco is if I'm in a place and I want to talk and I can't hear myself. Being from the old school, I don't quite get the business of turning it up as far as it will possibly go. Half of those guys end up being deaf in the upper registers anyway. I don't have perfect pitch or anything, but I think I would like to be able to hear the high notes, so I don't get right up next to the stacks when they start playing.

*Can you think of any high points in your career as far as the guitar is concerned?*

I think it was a *Mike Douglas Show*, and the Mills Brothers were on. And they said, "Get your guitar, George." I sat with them in the medleys and they did songs I knew. Playing with them was really kind of a kick because when I was in the service we'd go to the post theater in Altus, Oklahoma, and they used to play Mills Brothers music before the picture would come on. "Paper Doll" was one of my favorites, and "Up A Lazy River" [both on *Mills Brothers Great Hits*, MCA, 25157] was a super favorite. So we got to the song "Up A Lazy River" on this show and they said, "Take the rest of it, George!" And I'm singing and pounding that guitar. But I don't think I made that big an impression on anybody else at all!

*Have there been other times when you particularly enjoyed playing?*

Sitting around sometimes backstage or between shows with guys like Les Paul and Georgie Barnes [Feb. 75] — he was another one of my favorites. But strangely enough, while it was a kick playing with these guys, if it's someone you *know*, it doesn't strike you at the time that you're sitting there playing with one of the greats. It's like sitting at home, playing with the kid next door, and then he goes on to do great things. At the time, it wasn't that big a thing, because none of us were making all that much money, and we were all doing the same thing—you know, driving the same kinds of cars and eating the blue-plate specials and things like that. I can't think off-hand of any particular moment playing with these guys that was a real standout. I'm getting so old now that everything is fading into a montage behind me, and until somebody asks or reminds me of these players, some of them don't enter my mind for a long time. And they were good friends, too!

*Do you have any advice for young players?*

No, because I go against all the things that should have been done. I tell my son, "Whatever you do, do it the best you can and really work at it." But if I, when I was 16 or 17, really worked at the guitar and studied, I'd probably be in a saloon in Chicago now, because I never would have been great enough to make big time as a guitar player. So I guess in order to get jobs, I had to be able to sing and do some comedy, too—that was my value. ■

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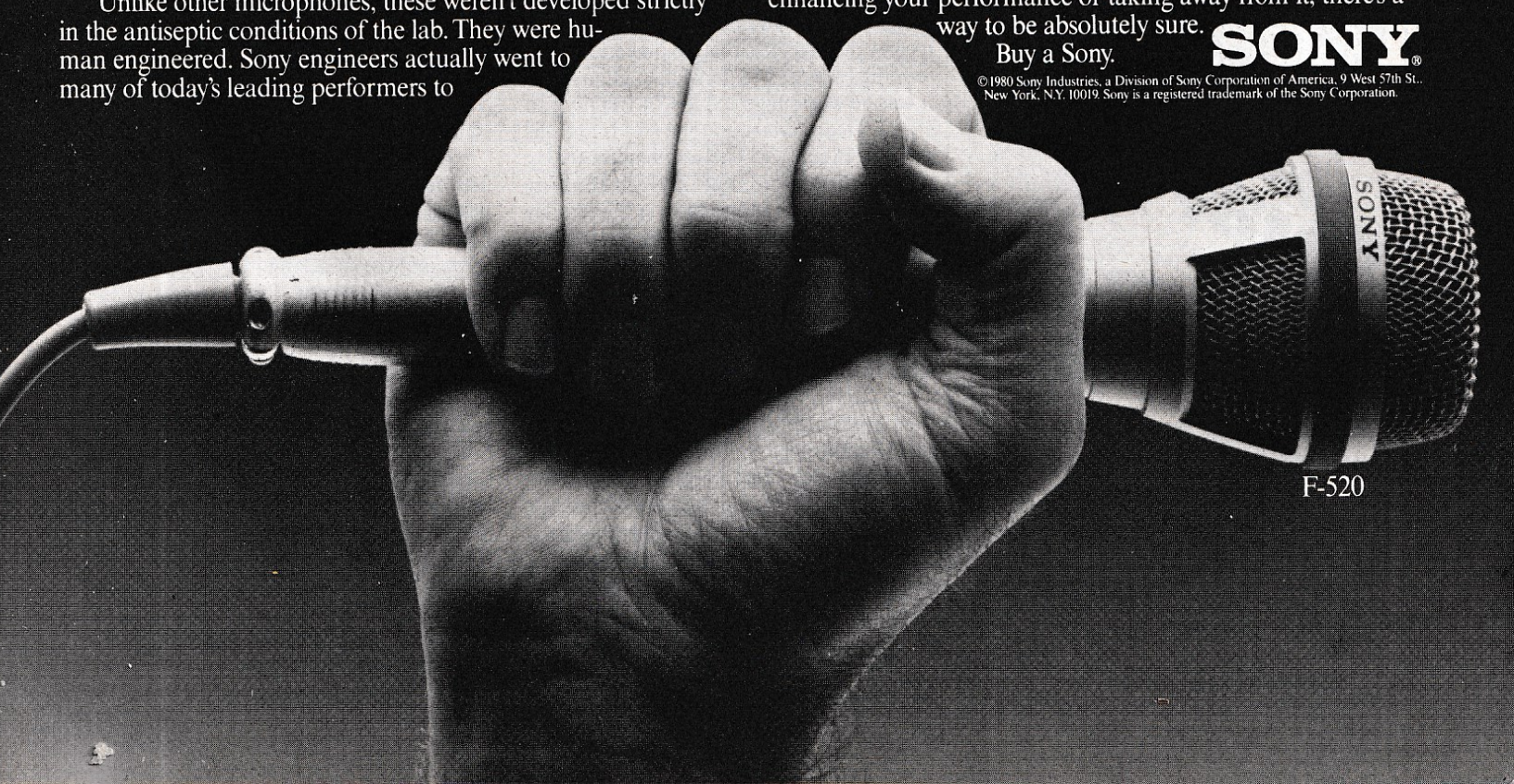


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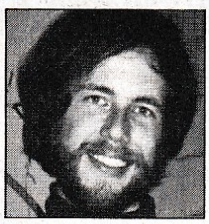


# TOM WHEELER
# RARE BIRD
## Martin's OM Series

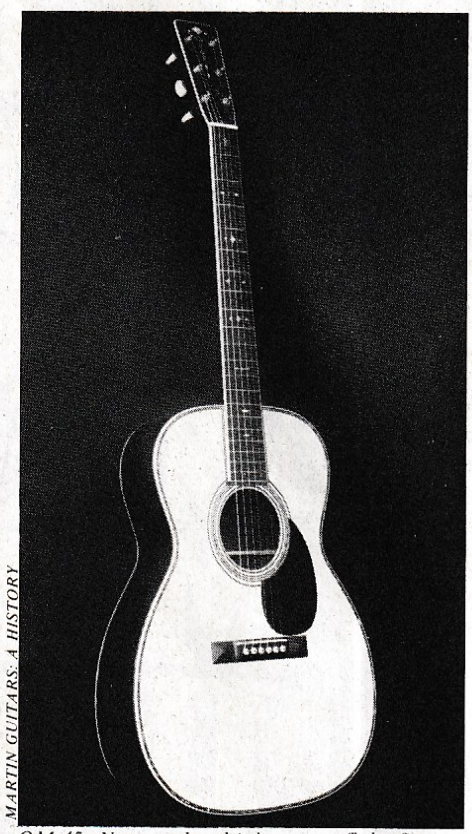
PEOPLE WHO STUDY the past like to keep things simple—first came Christopher Columbus, then the Industrial Revolution, then Cheez-Whip. The road of history is actually full of potholes and intersected by detours, but once in a while, sure enough, we can ascribe a particular instrument to a particular inventor. Martin's OM line, which includes some of the company's all-time classics, dates back to one day in October 1929 when Perry Bechtel walked into the factory with a suggestion.

Banjos and ukuleles had enjoyed their heydays, and the guitar was in the dawn of its ascendancy. It was also the dawn of the Great Depression. As Mike Longworth wrote in *Martin Guitars: A History* (out of print, we hope temporarily), the company was generally leery of diversification, but "the Depression of the 1930s was a different matter. You did what you had to do to keep the home fires burning. . . . Martin would get business, as other manufacturers did, by thinking up new items and changing their standard designs. This was actually the reason the Dreadnought size was added to the Martin line as a regular item. The 14-fret neck was another such innovation."

The OM series was Martin's first line of flat-top instruments whose necks joined the body at the 14th fret (the term "14-fret neck" refers to necks of this type, not to those with a *total* of 14 frets). Mr. Bechtel was a renowned banjoist from Atlanta, and he saw the writing on the wall: The banjo was on its way out; the guitar was on its way in. Like other banjo players, he was looking for a way to convert to guitar, and it was he who suggested the 14-fret neck to Frank Henry Martin (1866-1948) and his staff of engineers. The craftsmen quickly built a prototype Style 28 with the new neck, which was followed by a few similar guitars; by the middle of 1930 the new model had joined the line.

The series of 14-fret guitars was called OM, not in reference to the mantra sometimes employed in contemplation of ultimate reality, but simply in reference to the name Orchestra Model. These instruments were essentially modified 000s. Some featured banjo pegs, no doubt suggested by Mr. Bechtel or other banjoists. While the 14-fret neck/body joint had been in use for some time on arch-tops, it was unusual—perhaps unique—on a flat-top guitar. The design was so popular that it became a standard in the Martin line, and then in the American guitar manufacturing industry.

Here are total production figures for the original OM guitars, which were built through 1933: OM-18 (765), OM-28 (487), OM-42 (only 2, both made in 1930), OM-45 (the top of the line, see photo; 40 were made), OM-45 DLX (14 were made, all in 1930; the model was a 45 with snowflake inlays on the bridge, a pearl-inlaid pickguard, and gold-plated banjo tuners with pearl knobs), and OM-18T (a tenor guitar; only one was built, and that was in 1931). Six special-order S OM-28's were constructed in 1969.



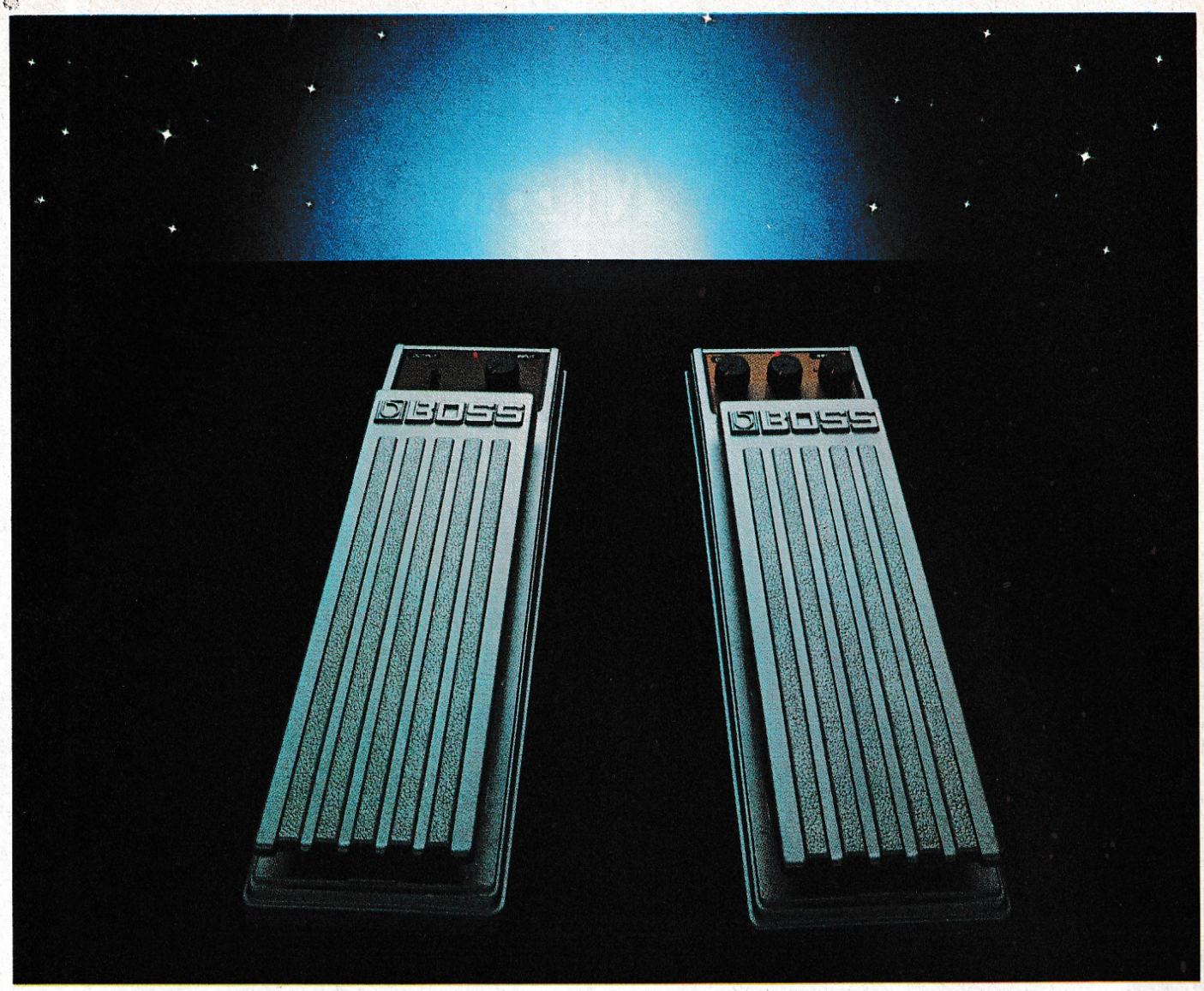
MARTIN GUITARS: A HISTORY

*OM-45. Note peghead inlay, snowflake fingerboard markers, and banjo pegs.*

After 1933 the company returned to the 000 designation for its 14-fret guitars of that size. Mike Longworth's book explains: "The only real difference between the OM series and the succeeding 14-fret 000 guitars was the scale length. The OM had a 25.4" scale (measurement from nut to bridge) whereas the 000 following it had the 24.9" scale as did the 0 and 00 sizes."

The OM-45 shown here has a spruce top and rosewood sides and back. Like other Style 45s it is inlaid with abalone around the soundhole, the top, and the fingerboard/top border. The belly bridge features pearl-dotted pins, and the gold banjo pegs have buttons of "ivory" Celluloid.

The 0-45 was the subject of May '78's Rare Bird column, and it contains information on the Style 45's trim, including fairly detailed descriptions of the various "flowerpot" (or "torch") peghead inlays.




# Silence Is Silver

Silver is the color of the BOSS Rocker Series—a dramatic new improvement in effects pedal technology.

Since the beginning of the special effects device a rocker pedal has been found to be the most simple and expressive means of adding the effect to a performance. Unfortunately, it has also been the noisest. Gears, cranks, potentiometers are all prone to mechanical stress, wear, and therefore, noise. The answer to this problem is the BOSS Rocker Series.

When we set out to develop the Rockers we observed that a pedal with mechanical contacts was a pedal that eventually produced noise; and a pedal that produced noise could not wear the BOSS name. For the Rockers, we chose a system called the Hall Effect. The Hall Effect is a magnetic field variable by the action of the pedal itself. There are no physical contacts whatsoever, so there can be no wear, and no noise.

The first of the two Rockers is the Rocker Wah. The Rocker Wah produces the classic Wah effect with clarity and intensity but also offers some new flexibility as well. A three position Range switch selects the center frequency at which the effect occurs, while the Width control varies the pedal's range.

The second new Rocker is the Rocker Distortion, which presents the most highly usable application of the Distortion effect—performance variation. The Rocker controlled Distortion Level is further contoured by controls for Output Level, Tone and Minimum Distortion Level. A silent switch under the front of the pedal sends the unit's normal 43dB gain up to 62dB for incredible harmonic feedback effects.

The Rockers also incorporate all those features you expect from BOSS: silent switching, LED status indicators, skid pads, battery eliminator jacks. But all of that goes without saying...except in our new BOSS catalog. If you'd like a copy send us a dollar and it's yours. The new color of silence is just the beginning.

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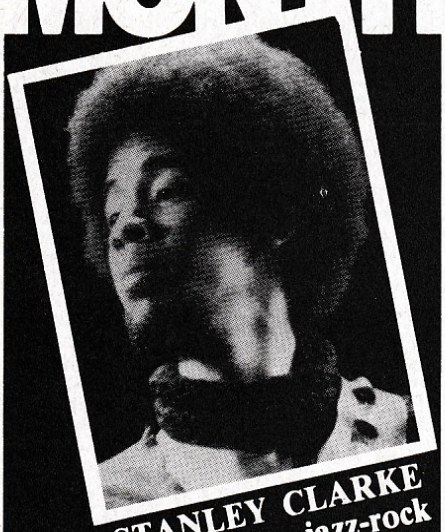
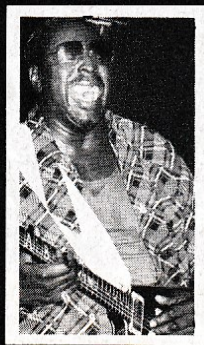
# NEXT MONTH

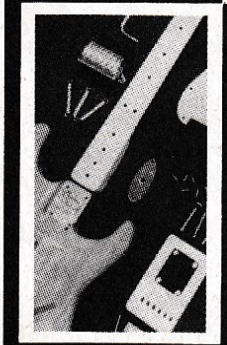


**STANLEY CLARKE**
**Premier jazz-rock bassist**



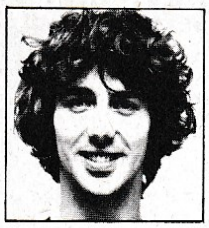
**LEFT HANDERS**
**Players & manufacturers discuss problems & equipment**

**TREVOR RABIN**
**Rising rock multi-instrumentalist**



**GUITAR KITS,II**
**Focusing on replacement parts**

**Guitar PLAYER**



## DON MENN
# WHAT'S IN A NAME

S.D.Curlee U.S.A.

BECAUSE HE DOESN'T like the sound of his own—that's why Bruce Randall Curlee used someone else's initials when naming his company. Then what's in an initial? Two of Randy's first pattern makers—one whose last name began with an S, the other whose began with a D. If the switch seems odd, it's well to remember that how something *sounds* is all important to Randy. As an entrepreneur with a company to name, as a bassist with a style to develop, as a designer with an instrument to manufacture, if he doesn't like a sound, he changes it. "That's why," he says, "we created the bass we did: to answer my own needs."

His first needs were those of a musician—specifically a bassist. Who knows? If you've heard Kentucky Fried Chicken commercials, you may have heard Randy thumping away on bass. And he's been a studio guitarist for years. If, over the last five years, you've attended any of a number of Chicago-based concerts for Ted Nugent [*GP*, Aug. '79], or ZZ Top, you may have seen Randy opening for such celebrated headliners with his locally renowned, progressive rock band Zazu. If you've strung up with Picato strings or cranked up a Hi-Watt amp, you can nod your thanks Curlee's way—through his International Music Imports he is the sole U.S./Mexico distributor of both. But his principal activity is manufacturing Curlee basses, banjos, and guitars in two dozen models. His revenues (5-1) and his heart (as you'd expect) tilt toward basses. His latest line is the S.D. Curlee International series. Rather than wait for an imitation of his instruments to come out, Randy—working with Jerry Freed's I.M.C.—has issued his own foreign-made "copy" instruments, which he expects will be distributed in 72 different countries by the end of 1980.

Born July 4, 1948, Curlee has spent his life in various Chicago suburbs. The middle kid between four siblings, Randy began piano lessons at age four. For two years he studied popular styles and rudimentary theory. But he loved those guitar-strumming cowboys of the silver and cathode-ray screens. He switched to guitar: 4-string, that is—bass. "I think probably because nobody else had one," he recalls. "But I don't think that there are any limitations on the bass. If you have the ability and want to sound like a guitar—chords and all—nobody even notices that the instrument has two less strings."

The Kingsmen (especially bassist Norm Sundholm) and the Ventures [*GP*, Feb. '71] were his first idols. By the time he was 15 he was a professional rocker. He did not bother with lessons. "I just played with people who were really good. You learn really quickly that way," he explains. He practiced as much as possible and gigged constantly. "We were always booked," he says. "There seemed to be a lot more school functions that hired live bands than there are now." And it was all straight-ahead rock and roll.

By the mid-'70s, Curlee saw the bass emerge as an instrument to be heard as well as felt. "I saw Stanley Clarke [*GP*, July '75] at a little club long before he became popular," Randy recalls. "He was a prodigy. I saw him first on upright bass when he was just a child. I was not a prodigy—just a hardworking kid." His musical preferences shifted to the sounds of John McLaughlin [Aug. '78], Weather Report, The Paul Winter Consort, and Oregon, though the influence was more in his head than his fingers: "I never really did try to copy anyone else's chops. I just zeroed in on trying to get a unique sound."

Some of his work experience began at home. "My old man owned a ranch, a shopping center, and a trucking company," Randy explains. "When I was really young I did a lot of grown-up-type work, like dispatching trucks. But later, most of the time, I just came up with ideas of my own and turned them into jobs." Most of those things related to music. Guitar trading came a step after prom bands. "I must have had 70 or 80 instruments go through my hands," Randy states. "I'd go to farm communities and pick up Les Pauls for less than a hundred bucks, and then come back to the city and sell them for four hundred. I've had some really low serial numbers like a 0078 Stratocaster and some great bass rarities like '53 Precisions that looked like Telecasters."

*Continued*

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The Pitch Transposer extends your musical boundaries by creating live instrumental and vocal harmonies. It has 4 presets which allow the artist to predetermine the intervals to be processed. Transposed intervals can be preset anywhere from an octave below to an octave above the original pitch. The chosen interval is activated by means of touch controls or a rugged footswitch. LED indicators display which of the four presets has been selected.

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MXR Professional Products Group

## S.D. CURLEE

Upon graduation from DePaul University with an MBA, Curlee went to work for and soon took over management of Kustom's three retail outlets in the Chicago area. Within two years, he opened his own store, and it was soon after that that he branched into importing—first Orange amplifiers and then later the Hi-Watt amps and Picato strings.

In 1976, after some unsuccessful attempts to work with others, Curlee decided to pursue his ideas on his own. He tooled up and started showing prototypes around. Deciding there was little room for uncertainty in the design of his instruments or the cash flow of his enterprise, he opened (and remains) on a C.O.D. basis only, and to build his prototypes and jigs, he hired pattern makers—airplane and automotive model builders working to tolerances of 1/1000 of an inch. "We just started off using talent like that," Curlee says, "Chicago is a big manufacturing center, so there's a lot of people around here with that ability. Several were fine musicians. It wasn't hard to convince them to come work for us. We got together, figured out the basic qualifications of the guitar—a double octave, a double-cutaway, this pickup configuration, that tone configuration, a neck both set-in and bolted-on to take advantage of the best features of both a Gibson and a Fender. Then we just refined it and refined it."

The firm lost money for the first year or two and remained in a severe back-order position. "But the product got out there," Randy states. "The demand was created and on our high months we were making 225 instruments a month. We were just kicking them out the door. My whole idea was to use the best components and come into the marketplace somewhere around $400 retail."

These days, his days are odd: He reaches the office at noon, handles his guitars and imports, and then goes to practice with his band—sometimes till 3:00 AM, a good time to unplug since the business day is just beginning in Europe (where 80% of his guitars are going) and he can get in some calls to straighten out foreign matters before getting some sleep.

But his eyes are focused most intently on Zazu. "I want to get back into music full-time. I have got a staff here at the factory that is so good, I could leave for a month and nothing would go wrong. Eleven people is all, but the amount of production they put out is unbelievable. The machinery—everything—we have done on our own. We didn't even visit another guitar factory. In fact, the main core of the crew right now didn't know a damn thing about building guitars before they came here. This is where the pattern makers came in handy. They made foolproof jigs, so it was really just a matter of training the people for safety. With some of the patterns and jigs we've got, you could come here tomorrow having never done anything, and I could have you turning out perfect guitar bodies in a matter of hours."

Even if he succeeds as a full-time musician, Curlee sees himself permanently embossed in the pegheads of his own instruments. "If your name is on there," he explains, "you have more of an interest than if the thing's called something impersonal like 'Show Model.' I can't envision myself ever getting away from Curlee Guitars. Though I've always preferred to just play music, I've been too much of a realist not to do something else along with it. So I think that the successes that have been attained in the manufacturing end of the music business are going to help me finally do what I'd rather do. My band Zazu is my next head-over-heels involvement."

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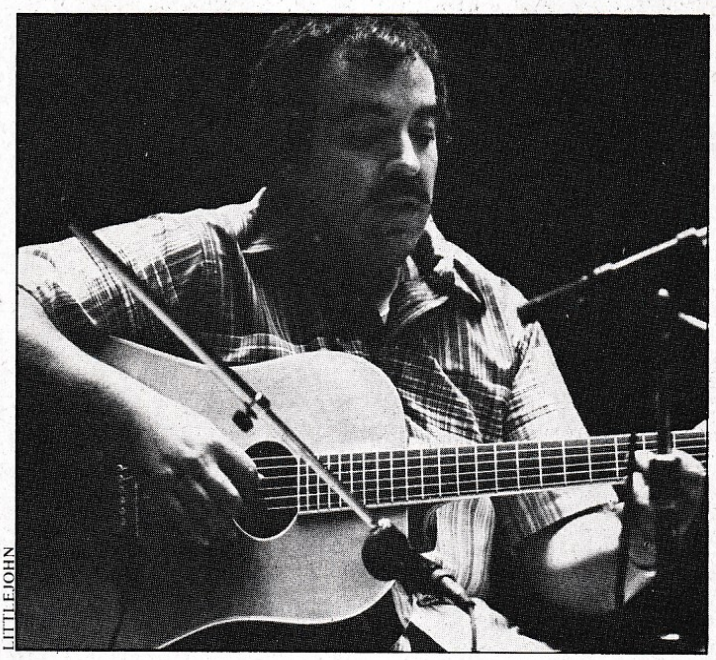
# Studio Guitarist
# SAL DI TROIA
## From The Monkees To Bacharach
## From Cat Chow To Cadillac

**By Arnie Berle**


LITTLE JOHN

BECAUSE OF his ability to play so well in several different styles, Sal DiTroia is one of the busiest New York session guitarists today. Whether the date calls for folk, jazz-rock or straight-ahead jazz, Sal can cover it all with equal facility. His aptitude has also placed him in demand at sessions in Los Angeles, Nashville, and Fort Lauderdale. Sal's fluid leads and precise rhythm work have contributed to albums by Burt Bacharach, Simon And Garfunkel, Janis Ian, Barbra Streisand, Melanie, and Peter, Paul And Mary, as well as numerous soundtracks including *Midnight Cowboy* (he fingerpicked the distinctive 12-string on "Everybody's Talkin'"), *The Godfather, Shampoo, Little Big Man*, and *Butch Cassidy And The Sundance Kid.* Television shows feature his talents, and Budweiser, Michelob, McDonald's, Burger King, Cadillac, Pepsi, Coke, Dr. Pepper, Purina Cat Chow, and Kentucky Fried Chicken ads would certainly lack zip without them.

Today Sal is preparing to record his first solo LP, which will add him to the growing ranks of studio guitarists who in recent years have come out from behind the scenes to show what they can do up front. But far from being tired of the day-to-day session work, even after almost two decades, Sal DiTroia is enthusiastic and as eager as ever to continue his role as a top sideman.

Musicality came early to Sal, who was born in Jamaica, New York, 39 years ago. His father played mandolin, and a few of his uncles were guitarists with various big bands. "One of my uncles played with Ralph Marterie's big band back in the Fifties," DiTroia recalls. "In fact, he was the one who actually started me on the guitar. He had to quit playing because he developed a form of arthritis in his hands. So, when I was about nine years old, he started showing me a few chords." It was another of Sal's uncles (not a professional player) who showed him how to use various chords: "He could play guitar using only *C, Am, F,* and *G7*-type chords. He also played in the key of *D*—using a *D* and an *A7* chord—but in any other key he was lost. He really impressed me, however, and inspired me to take lessons from a neighborhood teacher when I was ten."

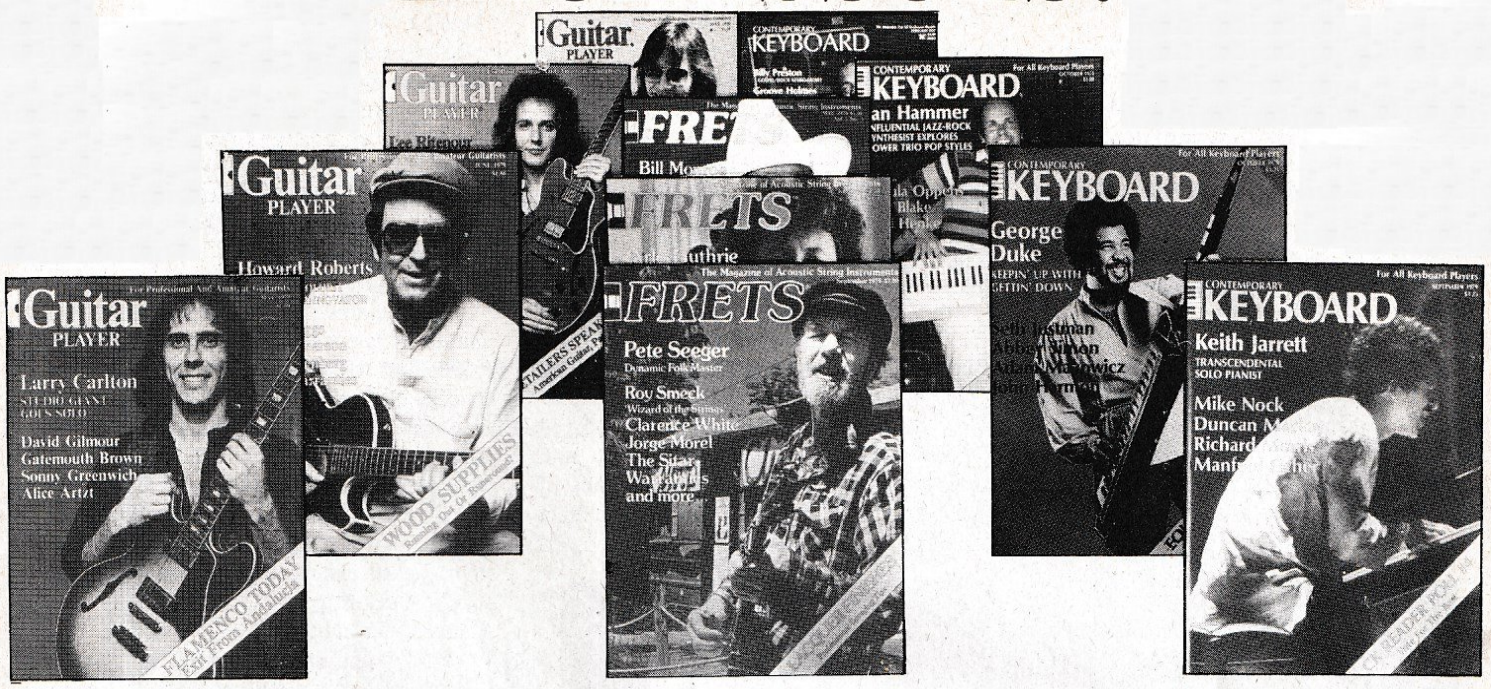
Looking back on his earliest formal instruction, Sal views the experience as a restrictive influence that was difficult to overcome. He says, "My teacher kept me in the first position for about three years, and told me I'd never make it as a guitar player; he said I wasn't serious enough. For years I believed that you were only supposed to use three fingers on the left hand. I was never told that the pinky could be involved. And to this day, I'm still not as comfortable using it as I should be, although I use it all the time. I was told that only when you were 'advanced' could you use your pinky. It was only about four or five years ago that I started to work on my 4th finger by practicing scales with only the 3rd and 4th fingers. I made up all kind of exercises that forced me to use the 4th finger."

Despite his slow progress with a teacher, Sal became adept at learning chords and licks off of records. He devoted more time to developing a good ear than to becoming an exceptional reader, because he felt that depending on written music was a chore. "All I could do was read in the first position," he says. "And I had no idea that I could play the same things at different places on the fingerboard. I discovered through experimentation that I could play melodies in more positions than just one. In those days, if a teacher taught scales and arpeggios and exercises up and down the neck, a student would think they were no good—he wanted to learn to play songs. Everybody did. So the teacher who taught songs in the first position was considered a great teacher."

Sal changed his opinions of teachers when, at the age of 14, he suddenly got the urge to become a recording musician. He also remembered hearing from one of his uncles that being a studio musician meant being a good sight-reader. So the aspiring Sal began reading and practicing from a variety of method books—practically anything he could get his hands on. His diligence paid off later; today DiTroia estimates that he spends about 75% of his time in the studios playing from chord charts, and the remaining 25% "reading, and reading *well.*" Among the books he used as guides were H. Klose's *Method For Clarinet* and the *Arban Complete Conservatory Method For Trumpet.* (Both are available from Carl Fischer Publ., 62 Cooper Square, New York, NY 10003.) "I would read through them without stopping to correct mistakes," he says. "You see, once you stop to correct yourself, then you're no longer sight-reading; you're practicing. If I made a mistake, I would keep going—at least I would keep the time going, so that if I did stop, I could come back in again in the correct rhythm. This way I was prepared for recording sessions, where you must keep going. To keep my pace I used a

*Continued*

# BACK ISSUES!




**GUITAR PLAYER:** *1973* $2.00 **G-31 John Cipollina,** Jim Sullivan, Barney Kessel, D'Angelico. **G-33 Artist Issue:** John Hammond, Chalker, Bromberg, Millington. **G-39 Pete Drake,** Pat Martino, Frank Beecher, Guitar Curriculum, Apprenticeships. *1974* $2.00 **G-42 J. Geils,** Bo Diddley, Mary Osborne, Gary Davis. *1975* $2.00 **G-55 Jan Akkerman,** Bill Harris, Amos Garrett, John Martyn. **G-59 JIMI HENDRIX SPECIAL EDITION REPRINT** Articles by J. Winter, L. Paul, J. McLaughlin, L. Coryell, M. Bloomfield, Solo, Equipment, Technique, etc. *1976* $1.75 **G-62 Elvin Bishop,** Bola Sete, John Abercrombie, Glen Campbell, D'Addario. **G-67 David Bromberg,** Barry Galbraith, Leon McAuliffe, Marcel Dadi. **G-69 Merle Travis,** Chuck Rainey, Sandy Bull, Frank Marino, Daryl Stuermer. *1977* $1.75 **G-71 GP's 10th Anniversary Issue,** Frank Zappa, Freddie King, Lindsey Buckingham, Early Country Guitar, GP's History. **G-72 Jim Messina,** John Williams, Larry Carlton. **G-73 Daniels/Crain,** Tommy Bolin, Jimmy Raney, T-Bone Walker, Humbuckers. **G-74 J.J. Cale,** Eric Stewart, Josh Graves, Emilio Pujol, Al Viola. **G-75 Bonnie Raitt,** Harvey Mandel, Terje Rypdal, Sustain, Jazz Chords. **G-77 Jimmy Page,** John Paul Jones, Jackson Browne, Earl Klugh, Lee Ritenour, David Lindley, Pee Wee Crayton. **G-78 Leo Kottke,** Jerry McGee, Jeff Newman, Tom Scholz, Singing Cowboys. **G-79 Albert King,** Joe Beck, Dave Davies, Hank Marvin, Monk Montgomery, Steel Convention. **G-710 Todd Rundgren,** Gene Bertoncini, Miguel Abloniz, Gary Richrath, Jazz Chords Part II. **G-711 Keith Richards,** John Sebastian, Tony Mottola, Phil Lesh, Fred McDowell, Phoebe Snow. **G-712 Les Paul,** Tony Rice, Funkadelic, Vicente Gomez, Women And Guitar, N.Y. Studios. *1978* $1.75 **G-81 Steve Miller,** Dominic Troiano, Noel Boggs, Barrios, Mike Elliott, Arranging For Guitar. **G-82 Al DiMeola,** Duane Eddy, Carlos Montoya, American Guitar Future, Pickups, Non-12-Tone Guitar. **G-83 Rory Gallagher,** Lonnie Mack, Narciso Yepes, Julius Bellson, Guitar Synthesizers. **G-84 Herb Ellis,** Steve Winwood, Leon Redbone, Joan Armatrading, Classical Careers, Chester & Lester. **G-85 Steve Howe,** Steve Cropper & Duck Dunn, Leo Fender, Herb Remington. **G-87 Jose Feliciano,** Atlanta Rhythm Section, Larry McGee, Carmen Mastren, Bass Strings, American Guitar Part II. **G-88 John McLaughlin,** Kerry Livgren & Rich Williams, Don Helms, Remo Palmier. **G-89 Ritchie Blackmore,** Ed Bickert, Colin Cameron, American Guitar Part III, Jimmy D'Aquisto, Baroque Guitar. **G-812 Bill Wyman,** Dixie Dregs, Doug Jernigan. *1979* $1.75 **G-91 Ace Frehley,** Gene Simmons, Paul Stanley, Carlos Bonell, Mike Oldfield, Toots Thielemans, Talk Boxes. **G-92 Lee Ritenour,** Mick Jones, Tommy Caldwell, American Guitar Part IV, Synthesizers. **G-93 Joe Perry,** Brad Whitford, Steve Khan, J.B. Hutto, Carter Family, Wireless Transmitters. **G-94 Michael Bloomfield,** Bootsy Collins, Juan Martin, Wilbert Longmire, Stefan Grossman, John Renbourn. **G-95 Larry Carlton,** David Gilmour, Gatemouth Brown, Sonny Greenwich, Alice Artzt. **G-96 Howard Roberts,** James Jamerson, Guitar Woods, Warranties. **G-97 George Benson,** Mark Knopfler, Vintage Dealers, Attachments. **G-98 Ted Nugent,** Robbie Shakespeare, Albert Collins, Eddie Durham, Steve Burgh, Building A Preamp. **G-99 Mick Ralphs,** Eric Gale, Tim Bogert, John Scofield, Arlen Roth, 8-String Guitar. **G-910 Chet Atkins,** Waddy Wachtel, Ray Parker Jr., Howie Collins, Cords, Guitar Book Authors. **G-911 Rick Nielsen,** Ryo Kawasaki, Bros. Johnson, Albert Valdez-Blain, Greg Douglass. *1980* **$1.75 G-02 Tommy Tedesco,** Mick Taylor, Monnette Sudler, Michael Newman, Arvella Gray, Bass Popping, Synthesizer Update, Chicago Session Guitarists. **G-03 Ry Cooder,** Larry Graham, Winnie Winston, Herb Ellis Clinic, Guitar Kits & Parts, Nashville Charts.

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metronome. This whole approach is different from when you practice technique."

By the time Sal had quit working with an instructor, he was forcing himself to play different sequences of notes. Sal also had a friend who was studying with a teacher named Howie Morgan. Morgan insisted that all of his students sight-read well, and pointers from his friend—and DiTroia's own persistence—proved valuable in sustaining Sal's interest in guitar over the next few years. Then he decided to pick up where he had left off in his formal studies, and he wanted to learn classical guitar.

Sal sought out jazz guitarist Billy Bauer [*GP*, Apr. '72] and asked him to teach him classical technique. Bauer was by no means a classical player, and he told DiTroia that classical technique wouldn't be very useful for him at that point. Instead, he helped the young guitarist to correct many bad habits he had acquired by teaching himself. "He had me reading jazz-style arrangements," Sal says, "and he taught me how to read syncopations—something I previously couldn't do very well. I always thought that only horn players had to read those kinds of rhythms. One thing we did was sit down without the guitar and sing through them. That was a great help."

Throughout his teens DiTroia played with a number of rock and roll bands, and even formed some of his own. But for most of the time he played in that style, he absolutely hated it. "Back then everything was triplets in what we called standard progression, like *C* to *Am* to *F* to *G7*," he recalls. "If you wanted to be hip you would change *F* to *Dm*. But I hated it. Then, one day I was told to check out a guy playing in a local club. It turned out to be Johnny Smith [*GP*, Mar. '70]; after hearing him, my whole outlook changed. So I called him to ask for lessons and he agreed to teach me."

Sal believes that he learned more from Smith by just watching him play than from actual lessons: "He was a very shy person, and he couldn't convey what he was doing very well. One important thing he did tell me was to change my pick. I had used a very heavy right-hand technique, so Johnny gave me a pick so thin that it felt like a piece of paper—it was so light. He used *lighter-than-light* picks and super-light-gauge strings. He had me restring my Gibson ES-175 with those super-light slinky-type strings, too. When I tried to play on his guitar, all I got was buzzes. When he played it, every note came out clearly and beautifully. While I never became a very soft player, I did soften my touch somewhat after that."

While under Smith's direction, DiTroia worked through various exercises and arpeggio studies, and was told to think of the guitar not just as a guitar, but as an instrument such as a horn. Smith suggested that Sal listen to horn players in order to broaden his style. He also instructed him to consciously develop his solos, instead of just throwing all his good licks into the first 16 bars like so many other people did. Says DiTroia, "He wanted me to think of a certain register as being the main register, and then start to play everything in that general vicinity. From there, I would gradually reach down or up, and steadily build the rest of the solo. I noticed that many horn players used this approach, and I found it very effective."

Even though Sal was picking up stylisms of various sax and trumpet players, he also kept listening to guitarists for new ideas. Among those he admired were Jimmy Raney [*GP*, Mar. '77] and Tal Farlow [June '75]. DiTroia found that because of the complexity of Farlow's solos he had difficulty fathoming them. He remained fascinated with the style nonetheless, and after studying with Smith was better able to comprehend Farlow's work.

DiTroia's first recording date was in the early 1960s with his group, the Marquis. He was understandably nervous when two pros, Don Arnone [*GP*, Feb. '78] and Al Casamenti, came in to play guitar on the session. Sal recalls, "I was sitting right in the middle of these two great studio players! Now, on the demo I had played a solo, but I didn't want to do the actual recording with those guys there; they really made me nervous. So the producer took the demo and played it for them. After they heard my solo, they said it was great, and that I should do it on the record. So I did. It was a jazz-rock type

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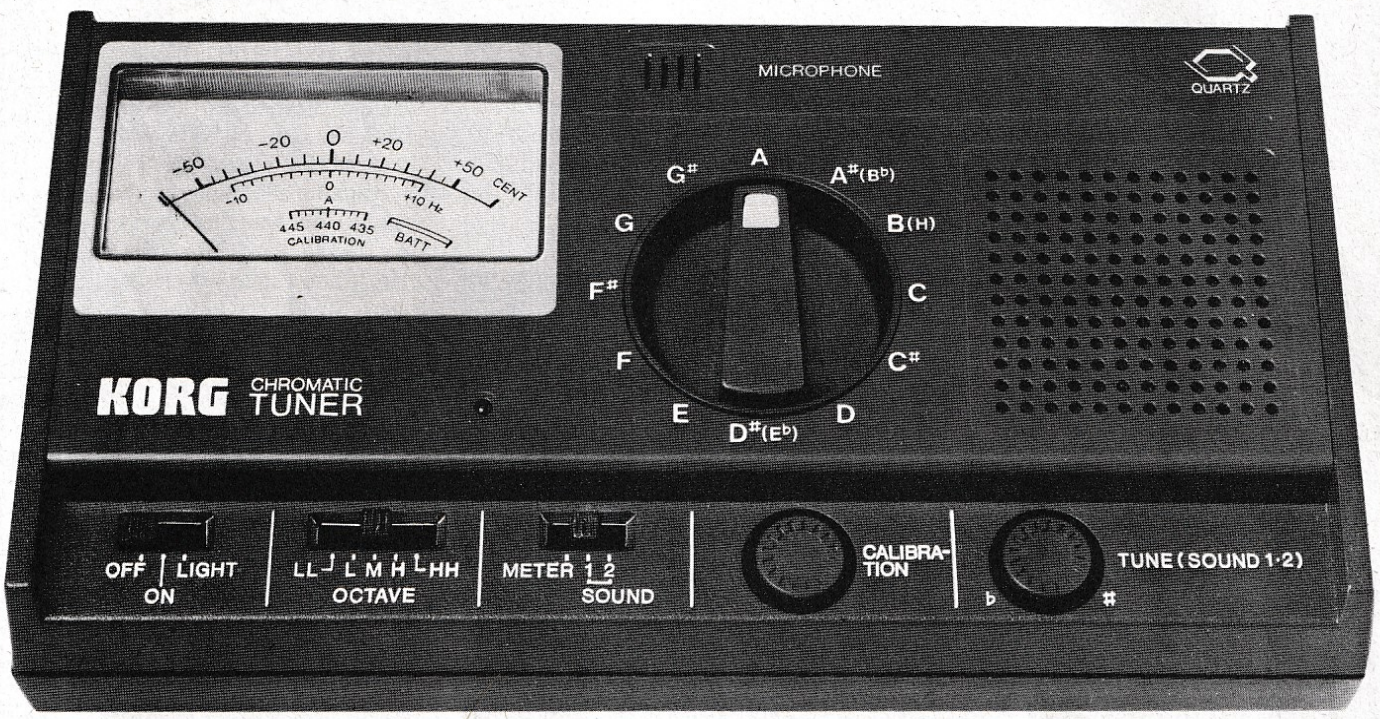


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of solo, since I was more of a jazz guitarist than a rock player."

Despite his efforts, the group never quite took off, but Sal had gained insight into what recording was like. Soon after the band's demise, a friend of Sal's built a studio, and the guitarist jammed there often. One day, another friend brought over a young singer named Janis Ian who had written a song and wanted to make a demo. Sal helped with the arrangement, and was eventually asked to play on the record. The song, "Society's Child" [from *Janis Ian*], turned out to be a hit; since then Sal has recorded several albums with the singer.

After his break with Janis Ian, DiTroia started working on a regular basis in New York's studios. A contractor by the name of Artie Kaplan told Sal that work was available if he wanted it. Jobs were scarce at first, but things soon picked up. "I was doing about one record date a month when I started," he says, "but by the end of the year I was doing about 15 a week." His schedule filled up as he started working for other producers, including Phil Spector, Jerry Lieber, Mike Stoller, and Jeff Barry. Among the groups he recorded with were R&B vocal troupes such as the Shangri-Las, the Shirelles, and the Drifters.

Sal describes the music given to guitarists on those early dates as "chord sheets with rhythms written in triplets. We either had to play lead lines or chords on '2' and '4'—no chord sounds, just *chicks*. That's all the guitarists could do until it was time for a solo; no turnarounds or anything like that. The producers frowned on anything else because it would get in the way of the vocals."

Despite all of the daily playing, Sal's chops weren't getting enough of a workout, and unknown to him they were slipping. One night at a party, the bassist and drummer from Sal's former band showed up and invited him to jam. By this time he had gained respect as a session guitarist and was ready to set the world on fire: "We started to play, and while I had the ideas in my head, I just couldn't seem to get them into my fingers; I couldn't play. I was really scared, and I realized that I wasn't such a hotshot guitar player after all. Maybe I was respected in the studios, but here these guys were looking at me and thinking, 'Hey, what happened to him?' You can lose your respect as a musician. Studio playing restricts you. There's no question about it.

"There is one thing about New York musicians that I noticed: They still don't get out to clubs and play. When I went out to California to record, I met Howard Roberts [*GP*, June '79], and every night after the guys got through recording—even if they worked an 18-hour day—they would go to someone's house or a club like Donte's [in North Hollywood] and play. So I've been trying to get some of the guys in New York to get together and jam. But many of them just look at me and say, 'What are you, crazy? I'm tired and I want to get home.' It gave me a bad taste for studio musicians.

"As a matter of fact, another gripe I have about some of my fellow studio musicians is their general lack of interest in their work. I get the biggest joy in listening to the playbacks after we've done some takes on a recording date. It's not an ego thing; it's just that I enjoy hearing the results. But most of the guys would rather go off in a corner and play cards or something like that instead of listening. I could never understand that."

DiTroia notes that there is a big difference between the musicians of New York and California. "New York's players have more energy in their music," Sal states. "No one else has that kind of energy. In California they're more into jazz, but a different kind of jazz. It's more of a lazy kind; it has a different kind of energy than you find in New York. But it has to be that way: In California, they live behind the beat, walk behind the beat, think behind the beat, and play behind the beat. Once, when I was out there doing a date, we were playing to a click track, and I noticed that the beat was just slightly behind the click. The musicians were a bunch of nice guys, so I felt I could ask them about it. They said it was true, but if you listen to recordings coming out of New York, the players are ahead of the click—simply because New Yorkers are always running around from here to there. It's just a reflection of the way people live; neither way is wrong. They're different."

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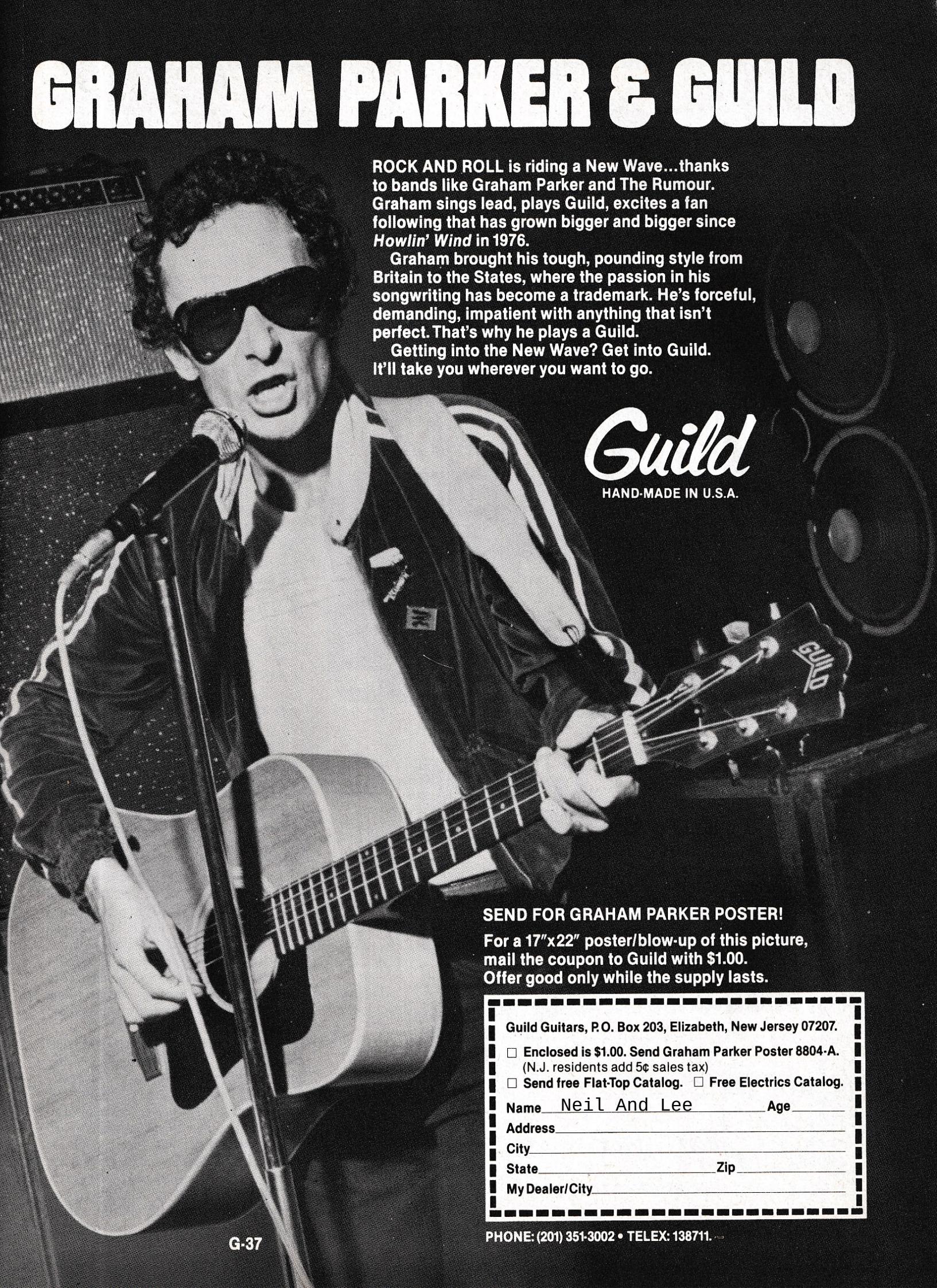

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## SAL DI TROIA

According to Sal, the bad attitudes of many studio musicians earned them a bad reputation among many New York producers in the past. "It just wasn't right to hire studio musicians," he says. "The producers would try to get self-contained groups, but not studio players. They simply had a bad attitude. For example, if you were booked into the studio from 7:00 to 10:00, studio musicians would go in at 7:00 and would leave exactly at 10:00 to go home. If the producer needed you for 15 minutes more, you had to be paid for a full hour of overtime. This is what I was taught from other musicians. Early in my career I even had a guy tell me not to let a producer know about any mistake I might have made, saying, 'If the producer is satisfied, you be satisfied.'

"One time we had been on a recording date which was supposed to end at 10:00, and at about ten minutes before 10:00 the producer said, 'Okay, guys. It was great.' I told him I'd made a bad mistake in a solo and thought it would stick out. They played the tape back and heard that I was right. By this time, the drummer had already packed his stuff. He then had to unpack so we could do the take over. We somehow managed to get it all in before 10:00, but the drummer said that I should never do that again; he was very busy and had no time for those kinds of things. I also noticed a lot of the other players glaring at me. They were *strictly business."* (Today, because of multitrack tape recorders, it's usually possible to simply punch out a wrong note and replace it with a good one.)

The mid-'60s were a good time for Sal, because he steadily began playing with more prestigious artists such as Simon And Garfunkel. He also found steady work doing abums for Burt Bacharach. Although Bacharach had a regular guitarist, Bill Suyker, he hired Sal as a second player. When Bill retired, Sal became Burt's first guitarist and was called on for many of the songwriter/producer's biggest hits, including "Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head" with B.J. Thomas, and "Do You Know The Way To San Jose?" with Dionne Warwick.

By the time DiTroia was working with Bacharach, his job had become much more involved than just playing chords in triplets to keep rhythm behind a singer. "We still got the chord charts," he says, "but the vocalist would sing the tune with either the pianist or the guitarist. The other tracks would be added later. Most record dates are like that. Burt Bacharach writes out everything—even to the point of telling a singer when to breathe. When we recorded 'San Jose' with Dionne Warwick, he wrote out the complete voicing for every chord. He wanted it exactly that way. The rhythm on that was also very complicated. But Burt feels that if you're a musician you should be able to read those kinds of things without chord symbols. Guitar players, though, aren't normally used to reading chords written on the staff. For Burt you *have* to."

Sal has found that many producers, including Bacharach, don't always know the guitar very well and consequently write some chord inversions that are suited to the piano but difficult or impossible to play on guitar. "Burt would sometimes spread them out so that you needed two hands to play them," he laughs. "On 'San Jose' he wrote them correctly. I'd say that on about 90% of his recordings I'd not only have to sight-read, but transpose at the same time, too, in order to make the chords more playable. Sometimes I would have to tell Burt about that, and he would say to just do whatever I could with it. The only thing he insisted upon was that the note on top be the one he wrote. Sometimes he'd say something like, 'Sal, I don't hear the *F* on top.' So I would have to change the chord's voicing. But everything he said was always in the way of a suggestion; he was never nasty about it."

Sal is known by many producers as a folk player, a reputation he earned after playing for five or six years with artists such as Peter, Paul And Mary, Simon And Garfunkel, and others in the '60s. His folk style developed as a result of his interest in Chet Atkins's [*GP*, Oct. '79] music and, interestingly enough, his interest in Johnny Smith as well. After hearing a record by Chet and Merle Travis [*GP*, Sept. '76], Sal found himself trying to figure out their picking style. He started

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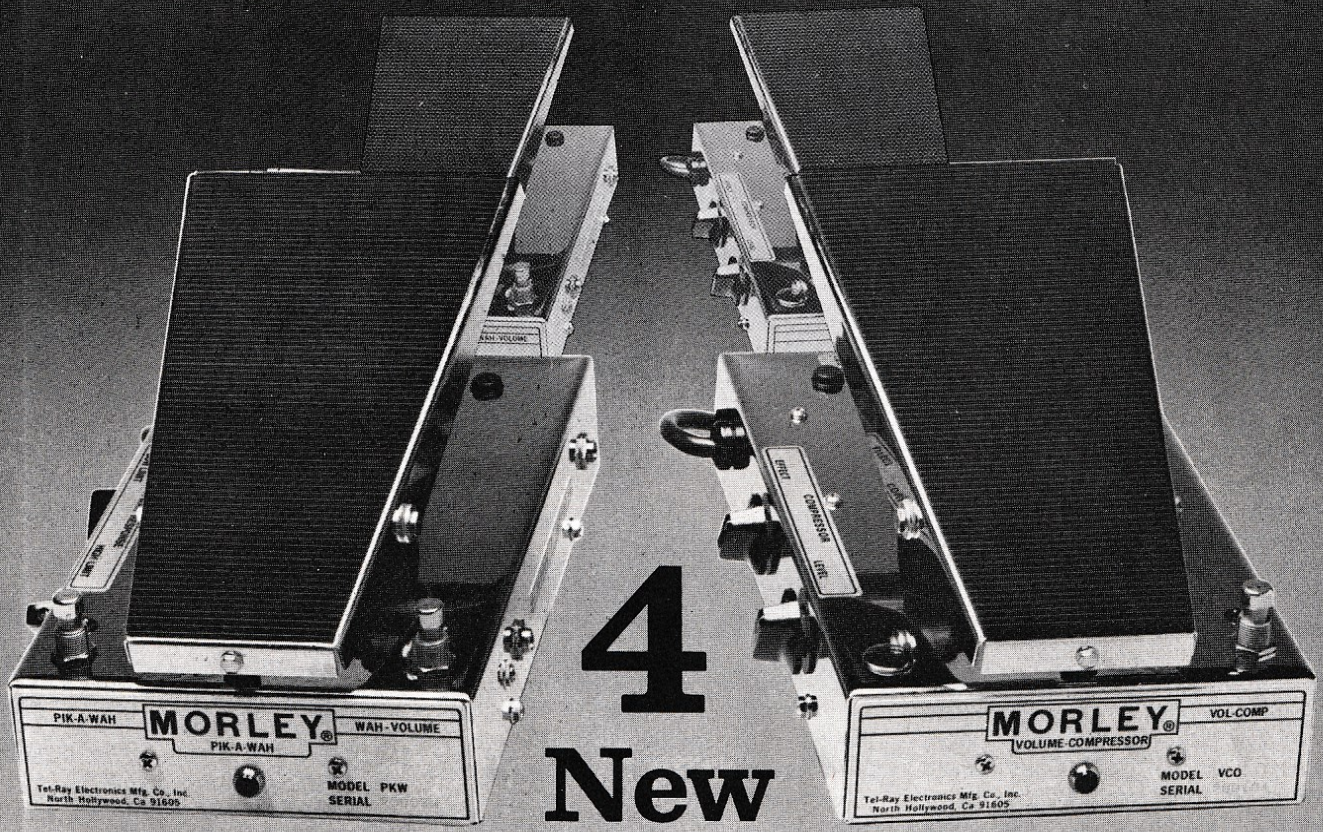


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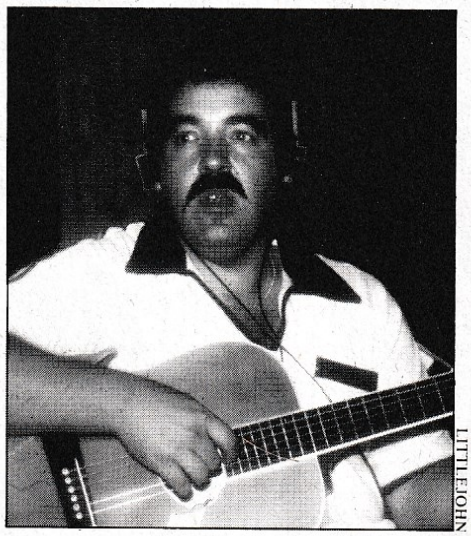
buying their records and copying their licks, using his thumb and two fingers. Not satisfied with what he was doing in this vein, DiTroia decided to try his hand at classical guitar. Then with the classical background he acquired, he was able to develop a technique that combines both classical and folk styles. "I hardly ever played electric guitar for several years," he recalls. "I had become disenchanted with it because I had been playing it for so long. When I tried the acoustic I realized that it was a pretty nice instrument."

Playing mostly acoustic guitar opened up a new world to Sal, and with it the opportunity to overcome old hang-ups. "I began to use a capo," he says. "Before that, I had always felt that it was a cheater; I was from the old school that didn't like them. But working more in the folk field I came to realize that the capo was important to that kind of music."

Sal has a virtual truckload of equipment for use on sessions, but usually takes only what he needs, in order to facilitate travel between studios. His main guitar is a 1979 Gibson L-5S solidbody electric with Schecter Z+ humbuckers. It's his favorite all-around instrument, and he estimates that he uses it on more than 95% of the work that calls for an electric. His other solidbody is a Schecter Telecaster-style guitar with a rosewood body and neck. It has Schecter hardware and pickups as well. "It feels like a great Telecaster, except much heavier," he says. "I've never owned a Fender guitar in my life, but the Schecter sounds great — it really sustains, too."

If he has a busy schedule of four or five sessions in a day, Sal will change his light-gauge GHS Boomers strings afterwards. If his calls are more infrequent, then he will wait three or four days to replace his strings. "I don't have an acid or sweat problem," he explains, "but I just make them go dead in a hurry — I guess I have a heavy touch."

Sal has four acoustic guitars, using his James D'Aquisto [*GP*, Sept. '78] flat-top steel-string for most of his studio calls. He also has a D'Aquisto single-cutaway round-hole arch-top, a Fylde [*GP*, Dec. '79] 12-string, and a classical made by Manuel Velasquez of Puerto Rico. (A D'Aquisto f-hole arch-top with pickups made by Attila Zoller [*GP*, Dec. '79] was recently stolen.) Aranjuez gold strings are used on the classical, but DiTroia alternates between light-gauge GHS and D'Aquisto strings for the other acoustics. "I like the acoustics best just before the strings are dead," he says. "It gives a good sound without a lot of overtones — kind of a Freddie Green [*GP*, June '68] sound — when you're playing rhythm."


LITTLE JOHN

Although most of New York's studios have amps for session guitarists to use, Sal has a Roland Jazz Chorus 120 with two 12s and an old Ampeg VT-10 with two 10s for the times when he must supply his own. He also has a well-stuffed bag of effects that sounds like a catalog checklist: Compression Sustainer, Touch Wah, Spectrum, Chorus, Over Drive, and Slow Gear envelope inverter (all by Boss); MXR's Digital Delay, Analog Delay, Distortion +, Flanger, and Noise Gate/Line Driver; plus a Mu-tron Volume/Wah and a Goodrich volume pedal.

He recently acquired a Korg X-911 synthesizer that pleases him not only because of its variety of sounds, but also because its monophonic operation forces him to play cleaner. He feels that with the synthesizer he has been able to pick up a few more sessions, adding even more work to his already busy schedule.

With a successful career in hand, Sal looks back upon his many learning experiences and views all his encounters positively. One recommendation he makes to aspiring guitarists with their eyes on the studio is to develop a good classical technique: "I know a lot of guitarists are turned off to the word 'classical,' but the technique is very important. It could open up a lot of things for you. Of course, I could also emphasize sight-reading and learning sofeggio — that is, singing intervals. Learn to play in a variety of styles, but at the same time do not pretend to be something you are not. If you're not into rock, then don't try to fake your way through it. I like a lot of different kinds of music, such as rock, jazz, and country, so I learned how to play them. I didn't say, 'I'm going to learn them because it will make money for me,' though. I'm not pretending that I really like all types of music. But you can learn important things by watching the guys who are good at each style. Become aware of everything and be patient. The trouble with too many people today is that everybody wants to learn fast. It just can't be done that way." ■

**A Selected DiTroia Discography**

**With Burt Bacharach** (all on A&M): *Reach Out*, S 4131; *Living Together*, S 3527; *Butch Cassidy And The Sundance Kid*, S 4227; *Greatest Hits*, S 3661. **With Janis Ian** (all on Columbia): *Stars*, KC 32857; *Between The Lines*, PC 33394; *Janis Ian*, JC 35325. **With Barbra Streisand** (on Columbia): *Stoney End*, KC 30378; *Songbird*, JC35375. **With Simon And Garfunkel** (on Columbia): *Bookends*, KCS 9529; *Parsley, Sage, Rosemary And Thyme*, CS 9363. **With others:** Neil Diamond, *And The Singer Sings His Songs*, MCA, MCA-2227; Billy Joel, *Cold Spring Harbor*, Family Productions, FPS-2700 [out of print]; Melanie, *Best Of Melanie*, Buddha, 5705; Helen Schneider, *So Close*, Windsong [dist. by - RCA], BXL 1-2037; Mary Travers, *Circles*, Warner Bros., BS 2795; Jane Oliver, *Chasing Rainbows*, Columbia, PC 34917; Harry Nilsson, *Midnight Cowboy* [soundtrack], United Artists, 5198.

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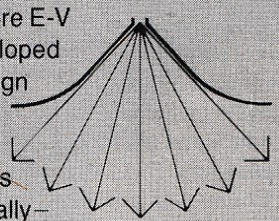

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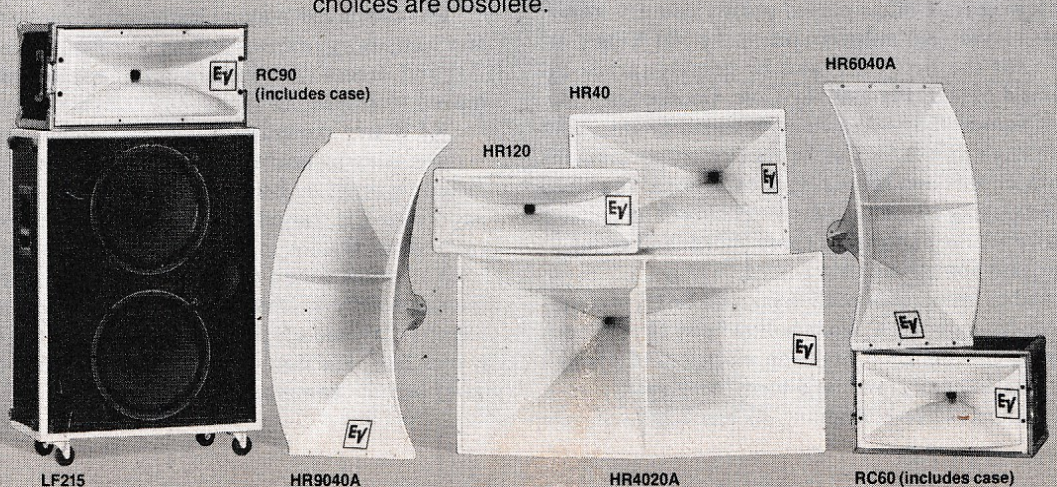

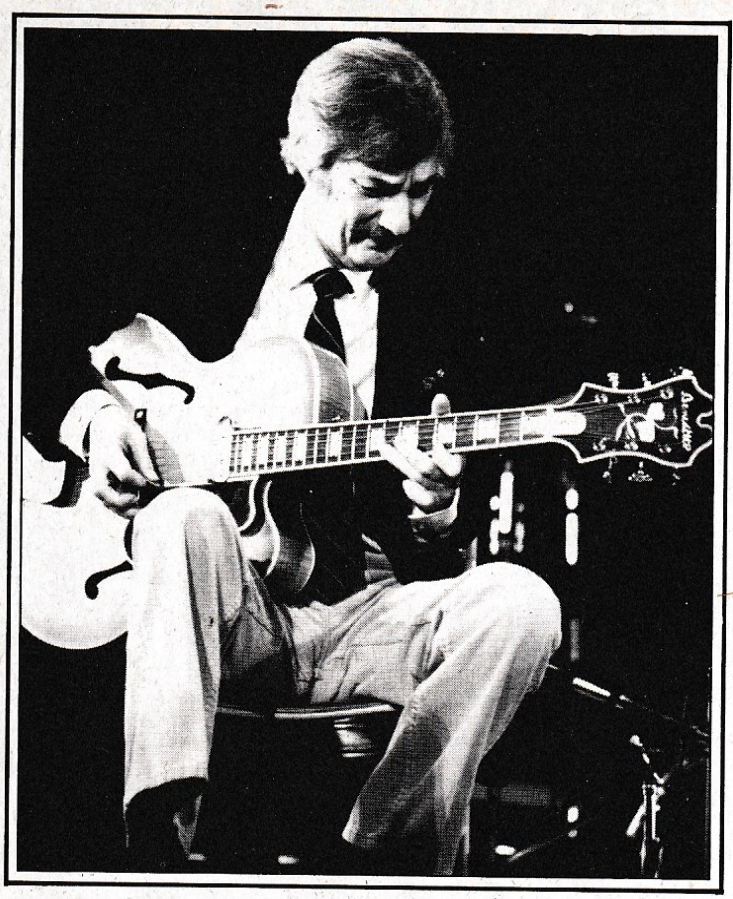

# CAL COLLINS

## Benny Goodman's Sideman, Session And Solo Jazz Guitarist

**By Jim Schwartz**

PAYING DUES IS PAR FOR THE course; just ask 46-year-old Cal Collins. From age five, when he received $5.00 for his first "professional" gig, to age 43, you could find Cal playplaying, teaching, and voraciously absorbing music in eastern Indiana and western Ohio. The pay was good; the work was personally fulfilling; but well-deserved public exposure eluded Cal, a skillful mainstream jazz guitar craftsman who employs a pianistic style of single-line phrasing. Not that Cal needed much acclaim: he is and has always been content just to play music to whoever wanted to hear it. But in 1976, when he first caught the ear of clarinetist/bandleader Benny Goodman and became rhythm guitarist for the "King of Swing" (remember, Goodman's taste in players included greats such as Charlie Christian [*GP*, Mar. '75], Eddie Lang [Oct. '78], Dick McDonough [Oct. '78], Bucky Pizzarelli [June '74], Allen Reuss, and George Van Eps [Mar. '70]), Cal Collins was launched into the international jazz spotlight. In a little less than four years he has recorded three solo albums and played on over a dozen as a sideman, and the world is finally discovering him.

Calvin Cecil Collins hails from Medora, Indiana, where he was born on May 5, 1933. County and bluegrass music first influenced him; he recalls at age five receiving $5.00 for playing "Hand Me Down My Walking Cane" on mandolin at an outdoor drive-in in Westport, Indiana. Two years later, Cal's grandparents bought him his first guitar—a black and gray Sears Roy Rogers model acoustic—and he began to teach himself guitar while continuing to hone his mandolin licks.

For the next few years Collins played mostly country music. Then, in 1944, the 11-year-old musician heard the Nat King Cole Trio on the radio for the first time, and he quickly turned his thoughts to the world of jazz. Pianists like Cole, George Shearing, Art Tatum, and Thomas "Fats" Waller supplanted country and bluegrass players as style guides for Cal; he began incorporating the keyboardists' funky chords and speedy, improvisational runs into his repertoire. "I was trying to mimic their block chords on guitar," he says. "I spent all my time hunting for those chords and trying to put them together into something that I liked."

As Cal continued to immerse himself in jazz, his tastes in equipment also changed; he acquired a Sears hollowbody electric and, shortly thereafter, a Gibson ES-5 arch-top electric and a small Gibson amplifier. In his early and mid-teens he gigged with a number of local groups while continuing to teach himself new things on the guitar. "I've got a real retaining-type memory," he says. "I'd hear different musicians, even piano players, and I could almost visualize chord positions and tones that I couldn't get on the guitar. I'm real lucky because I can hear something through one or two times and then play it back."

While jazz pianists kept capturing Collin's attention, he also began listening to a number of guitarists: Freddie Green [*GP*, June '68] with Count Basie, and John Collins and Irving Ashby [Sept. '74] with Nat King Cole helped Cal better understand the relationship of the guitar to other instruments in a rhythm context. With his acquisition of the ES-5, Collins noticed an improvement in his playing ability: "When I got the Gibson, I could physically play more things than I could on the other guitar. Its neck was smaller, the action was better, and it didn't hurt me to really stretch out and find some chords that would have been practically impossible to play on the Sears because of its action."

At age 16, Collins began experimenting with another guitar playing style: Travis picking, developed by Merle Travis [*GP*, Sept. '76] and popularized by Chet Atkins [Oct. '79]. "I got it going," Cal recalls, "but I just used my thumb and 1st finger on my right hand. I didn't really know how to approach that fingerstyle thing, however, so I developed a method of holding the pick in a normal position and using the backs of my fingernails, too; in essence, I have five picks in my hand, and I can play five voices of the six available to me. Later I worked on doing down-strokes and up-strokes, but I really had to practice because I wound up tearing my fingernails off."

Cal continued playing with small combos in eastern Indiana and watching guitarists such as Wes Montgomery [*GP*, July/Aug. '73] and others when they would be in the area. In 1955 Collins moved to Hamilton, Ohio—just north of Cincinnati—and joined an R&B trio composed of guitar, organ, and drums. Later he teamed with a local clarinetist and began playing swing music, including songs by Benny Goodman. In addition, while all this was happening Cal started getting calls for commercial session work; he entered the studios in Cincinnati when he was 24 years old.

Numerous wine and beer companies, as well as civic groups in the southwestern Ohio city, used Collins on their predominantly country-flavored spots. Besides playing guitar, Cal would frequently pick bass, and doubling [playing more than one instrument on a date] became commonplace for him.

*Continued*

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## CAL COLLINS

Not only did Cal keep busy with commercial calls during the day and playing in jazz groups at night, but he also started receiving requests from several music stores in the area to teach guitar. "I'd just taught myself to read music a little," he says, "and when they asked me to teach others guitar I said, 'Well, hell, I don't know how to read music or anything.' They said, 'All you've got to do is start with beginners and just keep ahead of them.' And it worked. I was very interested in it because I wanted to see how what I was playing would look written out. So I would practice writing music—you know, putting single notes and tone clusters on the sheet—and I got pretty proficient at writing music, more so than at reading it. In many ways it was a very lucky thing for my musical career that this happened. But I'm still a poor reader, except for chord symbols and single-line stuff."

Collins continued gigging, doing commercials, and teaching in the Greater Cincinnati area until September 1976, when he was asked to join Benny Goodman's band. Cal was playing in a club with trumpeter Jack Sheldon—a close friend of Goodman. Jack knew Benny needed a guitarist, and recommended Collins. After a trial run Cal was hired by Goodman and began an association with him which lasted for over three years. Collins recalls working with Benny: "When we started out, we would average about five concerts in a month. For most of them we'd catch a plane in the afternoon, play that night, and come back the next day. They were 24- to 30-hour trips, which I thought was great."

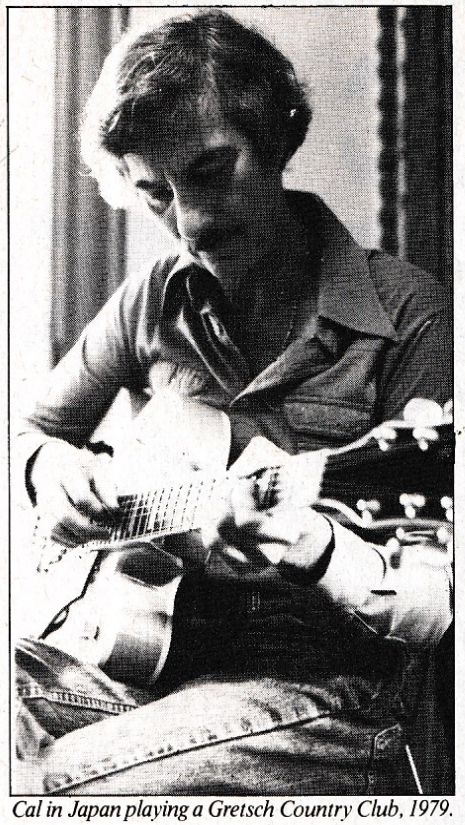
Traveling extensively with Goodman was quite a change for Cal, who was used to Midwestern life for the previous 42 years. Not only that, but he found himself playing acoustic rather than electric guitar with the bandleader. "Benny hates electronics anyhow," Cal says. "He doesn't even like microphones. One time I told him I'd bring my Garcia classical guitar along, and when I did our soundman stuck a mike real close to the soundhole and I started playing. The blend was real nice; Benny and I both got off on it, so I mostly used the classical after that."

Touring and recording with Goodman from 1976 to 1979 proved to be the catalyst for Cal's recent album ventures as both soloist and sideman on numerous Concord Jazz [Box 845, Concord, CA 94522] projects. His association with the record company and its president, Carl Jefferson, began while Collins played with Goodman at the 1977 Concord Jazz Festival in Concord, California. Cal recalls what happened: "[Drummer] Jake Hanna knew me, and he suggested to Carl that he pick me up and sign me to a contract before somebody else did. I was staying at the Concord Inn, and Carl sent a car around for me. I spoke with him, and he said, 'I want to record you; I want to record your first album with Jake and [bassist] Monty Budwig.' So I said that would be great. There was nothing on paper or anything; Carl tells you, gives you a handshake, and that's it."

Collins began work on his first LP, *Cincinnati To LA*, shortly thereafter. Almost as soon as that was finished, he commenced playing on two more albums: *Scott Hamilton 2* and Rosemary Clooney's *Rosie Sings Bing*. More solo and session calls followed—so many, in fact, that Cal chose to leave Goodman in mid-'79 to work full-time for Concord.

On all of his Concord records, Collins used one of three guitars: a mid-'60s Gretsch Nashville model electric, a modified 1957 Gibson S-300 arch-top acoustic (he had Gibson install a single humbucking pickup and controls in it), and a '79 Cremona model acoustic-electric arch-top made by luthier Bob Benedetto [Box 1221, Homosassa Springs, FL 32674]. Cal played the Gretsch on his first two LPs, *Cincinnati To LA* and *Cal Collins In San Francisco*; he used the Gibson on his more recent *Blues On My Mind*; and on his forthcoming LP he played the Cremona. "It's the most gorgeous guitar I've ever played in my life," he says of the latter. "It is as if it were built for me."

Collins uses La Bella strings on his Cremona, gauges .011 to .054 (high to low). He employs a gray Herco heavy-gauge pick, and when recording or gigging live he uses a Polytone Mini-Brute amplifier. "On my



*Cal in Japan playing a Gretsch Country Club, 1979.*

Concord sessions I told them to mike the amp and not use too much direct at all," Cal says. "On my upcoming LP I used the Benedetto; I wanted to emphasize its marvelous acoustic properties, so I told Phil Edwards, our engineer, to work on it. He plugged me in direct and put two pencil mikes straight into the guitar's f-holes. There's a lot of pick noise and fingernail noise and string noise, but it's good—that's the way I wanted it to sound at times, like a steel-string acoustic guitar."

Stylistically, Cal feels that his early training on the mandolin and his attempts to emulate jazz pianists made him more adept at his current mainstream jazz forte, the single-line run: "For many years I've tried to make my particular style sound more like piano, more pianistic, so I could actually play lines and also comp with myself. Playing with a pick and with my fingernails allows me to do that; I can play some block chords and then some fast runs, and I've gotten into the habit in the last few years of using the 3rd finger on my right hand as an up-stroke on the first string. If the melody line is on the high *E*, I use the 3rd finger because it gives a different, brighter sound than if I used a pick. In a way doing that was like adding my own manual equalizer. I tried to use a standard EQ, but I can't get used to them. They do what I want them to do—jack up the top-end sound of the first string—but I don't like the tone they put out."

The future for Cal Collins, no doubt, will remain full of activity. He is still at a loss, however, to explain why, with musical roots buried deep in the hills and valleys of Appalachia's western reaches, he became a jazz guitarist: "I had no roots in anything except the bluegrass and hard-core country stuff, and it seemed like my interest in jazz just evolved. I really think that a jazz player has to be born with that thing in their head. I have to believe that because that's exactly what happened to me. I was playing fairly decent jazz guitar before I knew anything about reading notes, time signatures, chords, and all that kind of stuff. I guess that's one of the reasons I was interested in teaching others to play; I was absolutely committed to learn formally what I already knew intuitively." And after waiting 42 years, Cal Collins is now one of the most prolific and gifted latecomers to jazz guitar. ■

**A Selected Collins Discography**

**Solo albums** (on Concord Jazz): *Cincinnati To LA*, CJ-59; *Cal Collins in San Francisco*, CJ-71; *Blues On My Mind*, CJ-95. **Anthologies:** *A Taste Of Jazz*, Concord Jazz, CJ-93. **With Benny Goodman:** *40th Anniversary Live at Carnegie Hall*, London, 2PS 918/9; *The King* [out of print]. **With Rosemary Clooney** (on Concord Jazz): *Rosie Sings Bing*, CJ-60; *Here's To My Lady*, CJ-81; *Rosemary Clooney Sings Ira Gershwin Lyrics*, CJ-112. **With Warren Vaché** (on Concord Jazz): *Jillian*, CJ-87; *Polished Brass*, CJ-98. **With others** (on Concord Jazz): *Concord Super Band In Tokyo*, CJ-80; Marshal Royal, *First Chair*, CJ-88; Scott Hamilton, *Scott Hamilton 2*, CJ-61.

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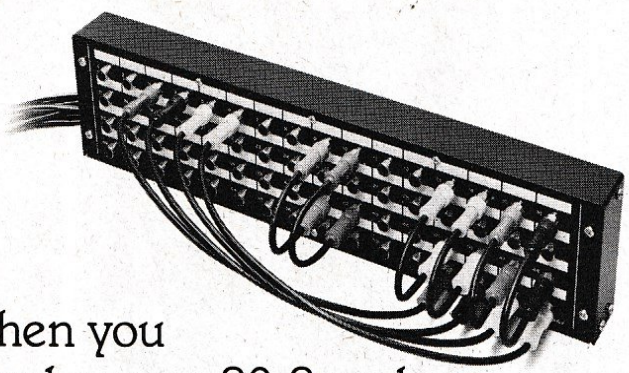


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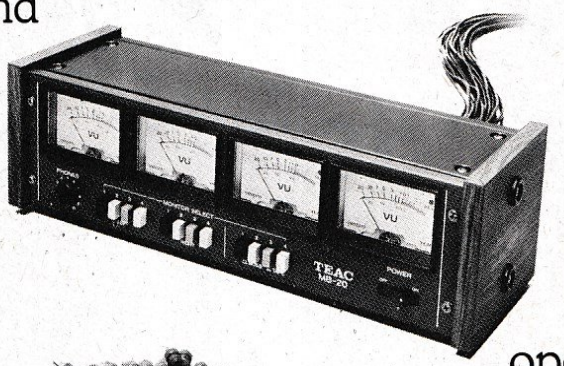


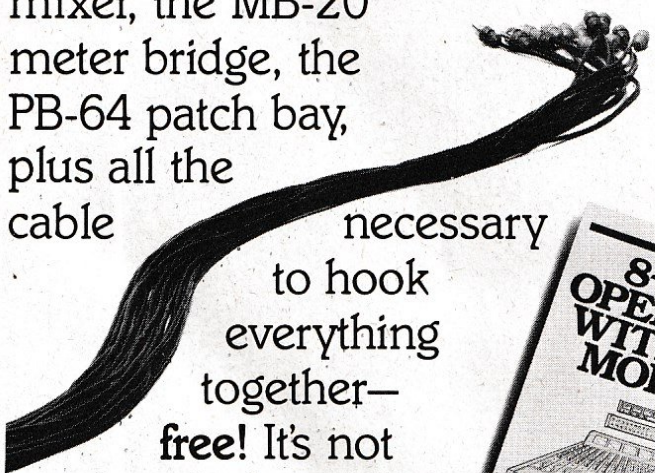

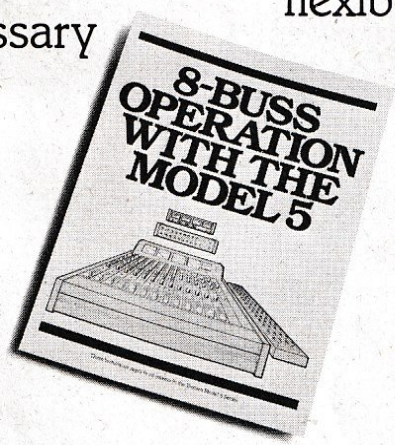


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# Submitting Ideas To Manufacturers

By Tom Wheeler

HAVING TRIED THE GIBSONS AND FENDERS and all the other leading guitars, you decide to improve on those designs yourself. You're handy with a protractor, right? So you make sketches and blueprints, and build a mockup. You assemble it and test it. Now you're ready to unveil your Fantasticaster and let the manufacturers fight over it. Word gets out. The major companies go on alert. Boardrooms are bustling long past midnight. CBS and Norlin execs scramble like interceptor pilots. They enter a bidding war. . . . Then the damned alarm clock goes off and ruins everything.

The dreams of would-be Leo Fenders are behind many of the letters we receive at *Guitar Player*, so we consulted various manufacturers on the topic of how a designer should go about submitting an idea for a new guitar or part. In general their advice was short and sour: Don't. It's not that they're close-minded, or that the players out there won't look at anything new, or that the industry's internal mechanisms are incapable of processing new products.

Nor is the problem a lack of imagination among inventors. God knows, there are prototypes of the Next Big Thing leaning up against the raincoats in a thousand closets, and sketches of guitar bodies jamming desk drawers from Maine to Maui.

The problem is that the vast majority of designers lack even a fundamental grasp of crucial aspects of the guitar business: what players are looking for, the interaction of manufacturers, jobbers, and retailers, the costs of materials, production, marketing, and distribution, and so on.

In *Annie Hall* Woody Allen gives a skimpy negligee to Diane Keaton for her birthday. She unwraps it and harrumphs, "This is for *you*, not me." The guitar manufacturers interviewed for this article similarly implied that most of the designs they receive—almost all of them—are more the attempts to actualize some guitar buff's wild fantasy than to provide the company with something it needs. The inventor's ego is mentioned below as a major obstacle, and a serious designer must ask: Am I designing for the market, or for myself?

Selling an amoeba-shaped electric with uranium pickups to a rock star for three grand is one thing, but the big company shoots for the serious amateur or the working musician, what Hartley Peavey calls the picker down at Sadie's Bar & Grill. That's the market; that's where the money is. Thus the manufacturers advise in most cases: Keep your laser preamps, your titanium necks, your bat-wing bodies.

In *GP*'s American Guitar series (Feb., July, and Sept. '78 and Feb. '79), relevant topics such as market trends and the structures of guitar commerce were discussed—debated in some cases—by two dozen manufacturers and several retailers. For the following round table we interviewed Bernardo Rico, founder of B. C. Rich; Jim Rickard, Ovation's manager of engineering and quality control; Hartley Peavey of Peavey Electronics; Rick Turner, co-founder of Alembic and founder of Turner Guitars; Tom Walker, president of Music Man; pickup designer Seymour Duncan; and attorney Harvey Ziff of Weinberg, Ziff and Miller, Palo Alto, California.

These respondents cover patents, the realities of large-scale production, their perceptions of what the market wants, research and development, success and failure, and what an inventor should know about working with other companies and about going into business for himself. They conclude that if a designer is to have any realistic chance of someday seeing his dream guitar in production, he must work around some hard facts. In short, as Rick Turner puts it, the dream is not enough.

* * * *

*DURING THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS, has your company taken an idea from the outside and manufactured the product?*

**Ovation:** No, we never have, except in one case: A fellow came in with a visual tuning aid, and we sold that for a while, but he had a completed project—the molds and everything—and we were mainly acting as a distributor. If you're willing to produce it yourself, you may find a great many people who'll market it, but if you're looking for someone to market *and* manufacture, the chances are very slim. You may just have to do it yourself if you believe in it that much. [*Ed. Note: The other respondents also said that they had never accepted an unsolicited design and carried it through to production.*]

*How many ideas are submitted to your company?*

**Music Man:** It's hard to generalize—a couple each month. Most of them are instrument-related, as opposed to amps and electronic circuits. Some of the ideas are totally useless. Some seem like good ideas but aren't marketable for one reason or another. Many have already been done, and the designer just isn't aware of it. Seldom do we see something that someone hasn't looked into previously. We take the attitude that if it's new and original, and if it's patented, we're always willing to look. If it's revolutionary and practical and marketable, we'd hate to say that we won't even look at it.

**B. C. Rich:** Sometimes if we are interested in a product the designer wants some outrageous sum of money for it. A person should figure out ahead of time just exactly how much he's willing to take, and if it's not a realistic figure he shouldn't bother.

*What advice would you give to aspiring inventors?*

**Peavey:** People who are going to turn the guitar world upside down—it seems like I get ten of those a day. My advice is this: Get it patented. I don't want to see it, don't want to hear about it, don't want to *know* about it if it's not patented.

*Why can't the manufacturer worry about that?*

**Peavey:** He's got his hands full worrying about manufacturing. Look, it's a fundamental law of the universe that you don't get something for nothing, okay? Let's get down to basics. The inventor's got something to *sell*. Well, if it's not protected, he's got nothing to sell. Why should I pay for an idea that any old boy can come along and copy? An idea's not enough—you can't sell it. You've got to have a *protected* idea.

*So the patent is not only better for the inventor, but also for the company as well.*

**Peavey:** Sure. If you divulge anything to anybody before you're protected, I'm sorry, you're just giving it away. A secret that's no

*Continued*

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## SUBMITTING IDEAS

longer a secret ain't much of a secret. You'd be surprised how many inventors need to be reminded of that. They're dying, bursting with the entrepreneurial urge to bare their soul. There was one young fella at the NAMM [National Association of Music Merchants] show who wanted to have a press conference to show everybody his design. I said, fella, look, it's none of my business, but take it from me: Don't. He said, "But it's the greatest, the most fantastic . . ." I told him, I don't care how fantastic it is—you're fixin' to fuck yourself.

*Will you advise and assist the designer of an unpatented guitar?*

**Peavey:** Literally at least two people a day come to me with an idea. At the NAMM show last January there must have been 50 of them. Look, I want to be open-minded. Hell, I don't have all the ideas by any means. But it's hard not to come off like a pompous ass, because I don't want to see the thing if it's not patented. Then they often get defensive and try to cram the thing down my throat. They're used to hearing their friends say yeah, yeah, yeah, let me see it. But look, you've got to consider it from the manufacturer's point of view. If the manufacturer sees, hears, touches, or observes the thing from afar, he's opening himself up to a potential lawsuit. That's why I won't touch it if it's not patented.

*That must discourage many optimistic guitar designers.*

**Peavey:** They get their feelings hurt and say, well, these big companies are not interested in new ideas. But bitter experience has proved that inventors are always claiming that someone stole their idea. At Peavey we've never taken a single thing from the outside, because I ain't seen anything that hasn't been done before. People are out there patenting all kinds of things. Some of these companies would patent the goddamned *wheel* if they thought they could get away with it. Some of these patents, frankly, aren't worth the powder to blow 'em to hell.

*Must the impatient inventor wait for his patent before showing his idea to anyone?*

**Turner:** No. The first fact of life is that a guitar designer needs a patent, but for ten dollars he can register his idea with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office [Washington, D.C. 20231; (703) 557-3158] in what's called the Disclosure Document program. It's not a patent, and it's not a patent application, but it does put on official record a claim of a certain invention on a certain date, and it may help out in a court case if a dispute arises as to who thought of the idea first. It attaches a date to your idea. I have to stress, though, that it's not conclusive; it's just a formal claim on your part. It's not a patent.

*Just what is a patent?*

**Ziff:** A patent is a legal right granted by the federal government for the exclusive use of an invention. It's good for 17 years. There are actually a couple of types. A design patent relates to aesthetic matters and probably costs in the neighborhood of $600 to $1,000 for the filing fees and attorney's fees; a mechanical patent, which relates to actual operation, would likely run between $2,000 and $2,500. It often takes a year or a couple of years for the patent to finally come through.

*Can the inventor avoid those costs and do all the patent application work himself?*

**Ziff:** It'd be extremely difficult for a person to do it himself. Justice Holmes said that a patent application is the most difficult of all legal documents to prepare, and even if you did it yourself it'd still cost from $300 to $500 for the application and filing fees.

**Turner:** The costs really add up. You have to pay a patent draftsman, and patent drawing is a total art unto itself. It's not like any other form of mechanical drawing. There's nothing that says that you have to use a lawyer, but there's a lot of red tape and rules that you have to know, and it's very complicated. It would be a good idea to do some research. [*Ed. Note: a Patent Office spokeswoman adds that several libraries and universities around the country have facilities for a limited patent search on microfilm, but that a thorough search would have to be done at the Arlington, Virginia, office near Washington.*]

*So you can look up to what Leo Fender had to say about it ten years ago.*

**Turner:** Exactly. Before you pay a lot of money to an attorney, you should at least go check out the field, and see what's out there. Get copies of other patents, and go back into history as far as necessary. The sources and references listed at the end of every patent can prove invaluable. You can check out the "prior art," which is the term they use. And get that registration in the mail.

**Ziff:** The registration, again, is not any long-term protection, and it's no substitute for a patent. It doesn't mean that someone can't steal your idea. It only means that if they do, then you've at least gone on record on a certain date with your description of the idea, which may or may not swing a court case in your favor. It certainly is a help. Here's another very important thing: Be careful about disclosing your invention to the public. You should be reasonably close to having your patent application ready, because once you have made your invention public—for example, at an exhibition, or showing it around, or taking it to a manufacturer—you have to file for the patent within one year, or you can lose the right to your patent. Obviously this is an extremely important thing for any inventor: He can lose the right to protection if he discloses the design in public and then lets a year go by before filing for the patent.

**Music Man:** We never allow anything to be shown unless it's patented, and that weeds out about 99% of the people who call right there.

*Aside from getting a patent, what more should an inventor do to protect himself?*

**Ovation:** Once you're patented, you really can't operate under this fear that your

*Continued*

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## SUBMITTING IDEAS

idea is going to be stolen. Once you start showing it around, it *can* be copied. Major manufacturers generally won't give exclusives. Some people come in and say, hey, before we show it to you, we want you to promise that you will never divulge our idea. But suppose someone comes in with a stereo pickup, and we sign one of those agreements. Later on we design a different type of stereo pickup. Well, there could be a problem; he would think that we'd somehow taken his idea. Maybe we had already designed it. There are many things that might pop up, and you really can't sign these things sight-unseen.

*What can the inventor do to prepare himself to meet with a manufacturer?*

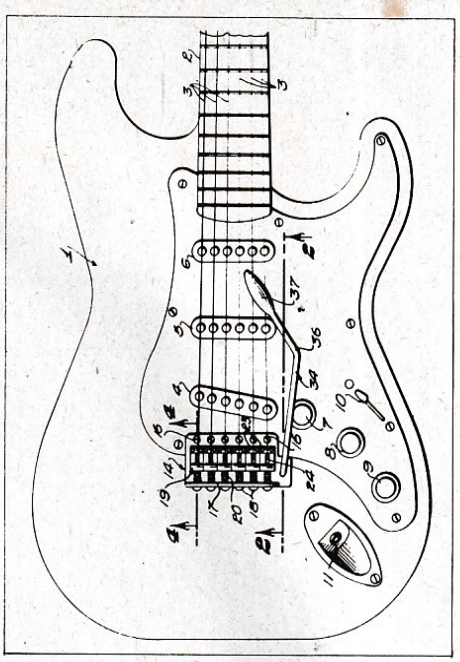
**Turner:** He's got to see it from the manufacturer's point of view. I went to Fender with an idea, and they said, well, the legal boys upstairs have this document that you have to sign before you can pull that thing out of the case. The document essentially limited Fender's liability in case they used the design without paying royalties, and it was an incredibly low limit. But these guys have so many things thrown at them that they have to do this. It seems like bullshit, but look at it from their point of view. Somebody could say, well I showed this thing to a guy at Fender. Then three years later, when Fender does something remotely similar—whether it's based on having seen that idea or not—the guy comes out of the woodwork and sues them for a million bucks. It's easy to look at it from my point of view as a designer, but they probably get unsolicited stuff every day, and you have to appreciate the implications of that. And you can't forget that all the big companies have guys that they pay nice salaries to for designing stuff. They'd rather pay somebody $20,000 a year to sit there and spew out ideas than pay royalties or buy designs outright.

**Ovation:** One designer came in and wanted a written agreement right away that we would pay him and not steal his idea. It was impossible to accommodate him, but we could understand his fear. Other people come in with their lawyers, and that's fine.

**Seymour Duncan:** When you're an individual it's hard to compete with the big companies who have such a large cash flow that they can get a patent on something just to keep anyone else from claiming the idea. Even if you do get something accepted, the company could sit on it for years before they did anything with it. You've got to be prepared for that kind of thing, and think about it ahead of time.

*Is it common for a big company to buy an idea with the intention of shelving it indefinitely, just to keep it off the market?*

**Ovation:** I don't think it's true. You hear of it in rumors, but not in reality. We would never buy anything to sit on it. There's no need. The big manufacturers have enough engineering talent that they recognize the needs of the market and work on what they



*Leo Fender's Stratocaster vibrato patent.*

think are salable items. One guitar company was making a pickup that interested us. We took one apart and decided that this was the way we wanted to go. We tried to get them to make it for us, but they weren't interested. We acknowledged their patent, of course, but we were able to come up with our own. I was so busy during the day that I couldn't work on it, so I took it home and laid it out on the couch and figured it out. It was an after-hours project. That sort of thing makes it just that much harder for an outsider to compete—there are enough people here who'd like to pursue it. This particular research resulted in the pickup that we use in our electric-acoustic guitars, and it wasn't even an official project at first.

**B. C. Rich:** You have to realize that even the small companies have the same sort of thing. Here at B. C. Rich there are really only two of us doing most of the design work, and we take pride in having designed a guitar ourselves. You'll find that kind of thing with just about any company, no matter what their size is.

**Ovation:** We have about a dozen people in engineering, and the production people are also continually submitting ideas. We have four guitarists in marketing, too.

*Given your employees' proximity to large-scale manufacture, are their ideas generally more practical?*

**Music Man:** That's part of it. We have an appreciation of marketability, and it isn't shared by many people on the outside. It's not enough to come up with something that a few people will buy. For example, several designs have been around for a collapsible guitar. Well, we just couldn't see a market big enough to justify the costs of tooling up for it. It doesn't mean that no one would buy one. Of the various designs that we saw, all of them had their merits. But if you're going to do hard tooling for the thing, then you've got to have some volume. I think the bulk of those ideas wind up with custom builders.

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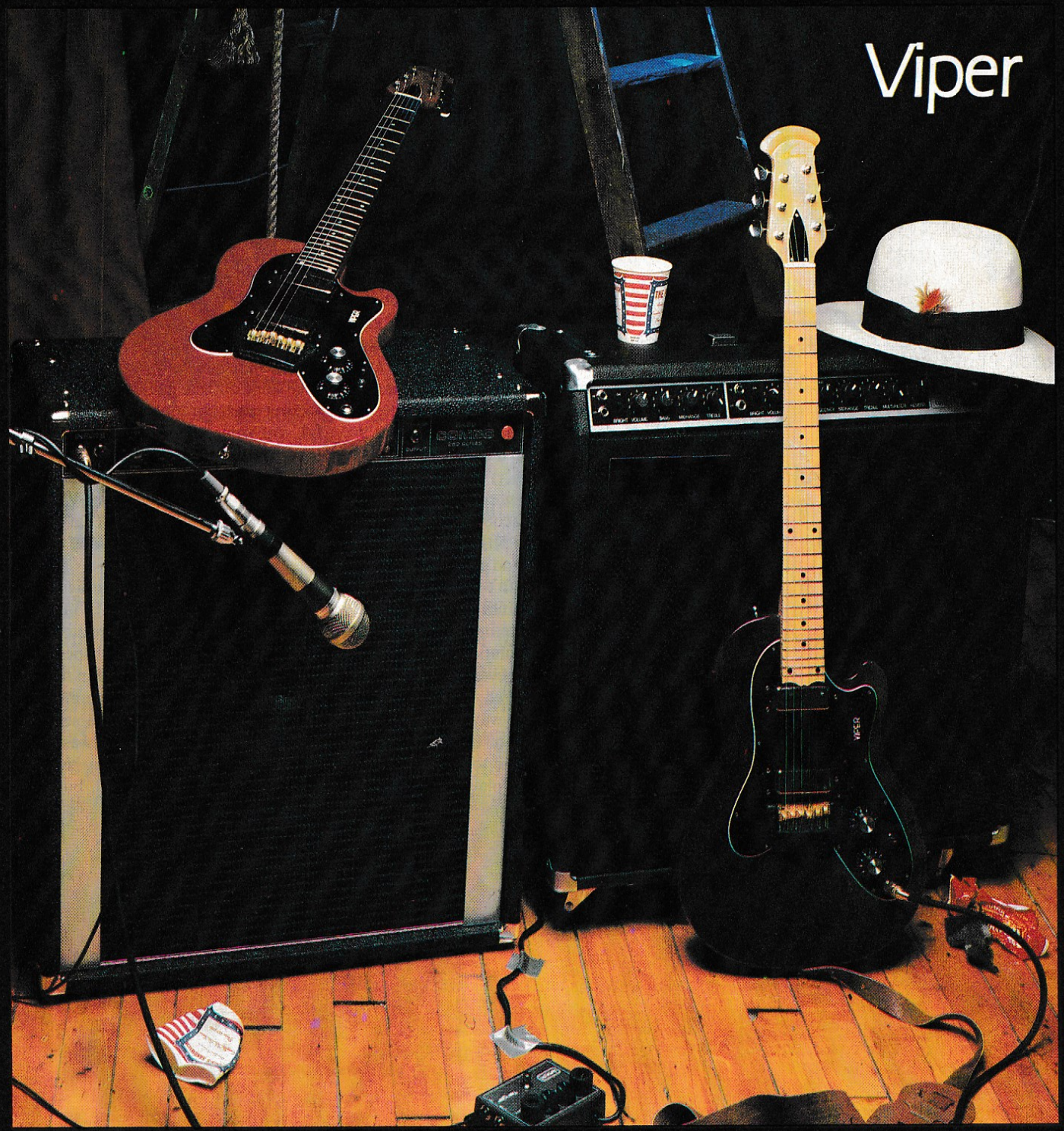


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## SUBMITTING IDEAS

That's where the ideas come from—amateurs or hobbyists or people who make custom guitars for professionals who can afford them.

*Once a designer has submitted his idea for a patent, what's the next step?*

**Ovation:** It's going to be very difficult to get anyone to do it unless you can show them a completed, working prototype that is so overwhelming that they say, "God, this is what the world needs!" In patent terms, building the prototype is called "reduction to practice." The thing should be in working order, a guitar that you don't have to make excuses for. Small finish imperfections are not so bad, but it should be marketable, as sellable as any other guitar in a music store.

*What does an inventor need besides a good idea, a patent, and a well-made prototype?*

**Ovation:** Someone needs money. There have been very good acoustic guitars, for example, that were built on a moderate scale —we've all seen them—and even though they were very good they didn't have much success, because the companies couldn't afford full-scale national marketing programs. A guy comes in with a revolutionary new tailpiece, and he figures that every guitar player will have to have one. Well, even assuming that it's a good idea, the way it really turns out is that the amount of marketing that goes into it will determine to an important degree how many guitar players want one.

*So then it follows that the inventor should approach the company with a large marketing budget.*

**Ovation:** Yes, but your conclusion presents a tremendous dilemma. There aren't that many people who are interested in marketing someone else's product.

*The company big enough to produce and market the thing also has its own designers. It's like the vicious circle faced by the aspiring recording artist—the radio stations won't play your record if it's not a hit, and it won't be a hit if they don't play it.*

**Ovation:** Right. There's a surplus of products, just like there's an incredible number of good musicians who are starving or just trying to make a living. They see a big star and say, hey, I'm as good as he is. But at the same time, for the person who's running the record company there's a serious *lack* of talent: Everyone is looking for that million-dollar idea, but just below the million-dollar level there are tons of ideas, all good.

*Then how likely is it that a person can do it on his own?*

**Ovation:** Larry DiMarzio made his own name by marketing, and no one else could have done that for him. He couldn't have gotten a Madison Avenue ad agency to do that. It was more like a singer/songwriter kind of thing, like Kris Kristofferson singing his own songs. DiMarzio saw a hole in the market and filled it himself. He was the one who could best market his product. My overall conclusion is that your chances of getting anywhere with a major manufacturer are one in a hundred or less—more like one in a thousand.

*Necessity is supposedly the mother of invention. What's the matter? Are people designing the wrong guitars?*

**Peavey:** Here's the irony of the whole thing, an observation from 25 years of experience: While guitar players often are extremely unconventional in their attitudes and their dress and their mode of living, when it comes down to guitars they are disgustingly conventional. What's the most valuable guitar today? It tends to be one just like some famous blues picker was using in 1956. So all these new ideas, these revolutions, tend to only flap their wings and die a fiery death. Like some of these guitars with onboard synthesizer parts—a great idea, but unsuccessful, just some engineer's mental masturbation. Marketing-wise, no odd-shaped guitar that *I* know of was ever successful on the initial introduction—the Flying V's, the Firebirds, you take your pick. That's why our own guitar looks like a hybrid of everything else.

*What's specifically wrong with most of the ideas submitted?*

**Peavey:** Most of them relate to exotic shapes of guitars, and exotic shapes of guitars don't sell. I had a fella come in here with a guitar he'd built out of an aluminum pipe he'd split lengthwise; it was a semicircular thing, a long half-cylinder. It was neat, in a way. I told him, look, this may be the greatest thing in the whole world, but honestly mister, *it ain't gonna sell.* Well, he got offended, packed up, and left. But I told him the truth.

*Have we seen the end of refinements in large-scale commercial guitars?*

**Peavey:** Until someone shows me different, I will be convinced of one fact: If you deviate very far from your basic Stratocaster or Les Paul, you're not going to get anywhere. From a marketing standpoint, every type of product matures. Automobiles come in all shapes and sizes, but they really haven't changed to any major degree in the last 15 years. Same with washing machines. Look at typewriters—what's happened since IBM introduced the ball type element many years ago? It's the same with guitars.

*But there have been onboard preamps, aluminum necks, synthetic bodies, and so on.*

**Peavey:** Sure, and there will always be changes in guitars that sell on a limited basis. But let's talk about guitars for the picker who's playing in Sadie's Bar & Grill. What does *he* think of it? Whether you or I or the inventor thinks it's the goddamnedest thing we ever saw, if the market will not accept it then it's just so much self-indulgence. The market is the judge; what anybody else thinks don't make a shit. And the market says over and over and over again: No, we don't want all that crap; we want a good feel, nice, ballsy parts, good quality, and an affordable price.

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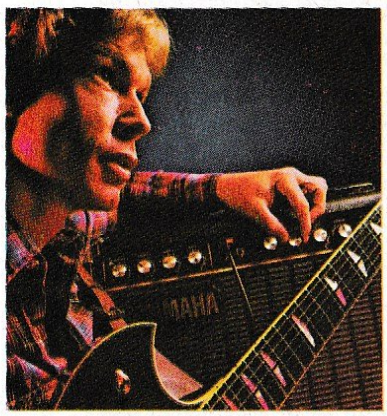
# How serious are you about a guitar or bass amp?



When you shop for an amp, you listen for the sound you want, and look for the reliability you need. You're not interested in tricks or gimmicks. Yamaha knows this.

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YAMAHA

## SUBMITTING IDEAS

*So the revolutions have been in areas other than guitar shape and basic function.*

**Peavey:** Don't get me wrong. Having a conventional guitar doesn't mean that it has to be made with conventional materials. They said you couldn't make guitars out of synthetics, but Ovation's done it, and we're going to do it. And it doesn't mean that you have to use unconventional production methods. They said you couldn't make guitars on machines, but we're doing it. Still, musicians just won't buy unconventional guitars on a big enough scale to make it worthwhile for a major manufacturer to go into production. As far as I am concerned, this is a basic theorem of the music business.

**Ovation:** The market is very conservative. We came out with our Breadwinner/Deacon series of electric guitars. The design was serious, and we spent a lot of time to make it well-balanced and comfortable to hold. The shape was like a battle-ax. It was functional, but the market seemed very resistant to take anything that far out. There are really only so many ways you can change the cutaways on a solidbody. I mean, you can shape the thing like an animal cracker or something, but if you're going to look like a guitar there are just so many possibilities. The Les Paul looks a lot like a cutaway archtop f-hole guitar in miniature, and you could even say that in a way, the Telecaster looks a little like a small Martin, in that it's basically square, but with a cutaway. Those types of guitars really aren't far out, and they are the most successful ones. I think that in all forms of art people sometimes have trouble doing variations on a theme. It's always easier to recognize something real nice and different than it is to figure it out.

*Are there many submissions of ideas for improving cost efficiency or production methods?*

**Peavey:** There never are. I never, ever, *ever* get suggestions for low-priced guitars. They are always extremely exotic guitars. *Es-o-terica*—that's what these inventors want to invent, no bread-and-butter stuff. I can never remember a bread-and-butter guitar. Their favorite stunt is to come up here with some crap, and it always ends up looking like a bat's wing. I can't always tell them, but sometimes the ideas are just awful. Guitar inventors consistently reinvent the wheel.

*Have all the good ideas already been conceived?*

**Music Man:** I think that when you get to this stage of the business, as long as it's been around, you don't run into too many ideas that haven't been tried at one time or another. It's very, very seldom that I see anything totally original and unique. When you're involved with Leo Fender, you don't run into too many things that he hasn't looked into previously. [*Ed. Note: See* GP, *May 78; Mr. Fender's company, CLF Research, makes Music Man guitars.*] He never did anything with many of his ideas for one reason or another, and he's very reluctant to look at anything that comes along, mainly because if it's something he's already working on, people will feel he stole the idea.

*Why would the production of a good design be postponed?*

**Ovation:** A company can have inventory problems. Suppose you've designed a new pickup assembly for a steel-string or something; well, you'll use up your remaining stock of the old ones before announcing the new ones. The marketing has to be all arranged, too. Mainly, it's just a matter of our having more ideas than we can possibly produce.

*How much room is there in the marketplace for a new guitar?*

**Ovation:** There aren't enough people to use up all the new guitar ideas; that's one thing. All together, the American companies produce roughly 100,000 acoustics and 100,000 electrics a year, with very few models when you look at it. The electrics are the Fenders and Les Pauls, and the acoustics are Ovations, Martins, and Guilds. That's obviously a huge generalization—there are so many companies, many designs, many guitars—but you'd be surprised at what a large portion of the market is accounted for by just a few models. So much of it depends on what the musicians play onstage. There is room for small manufacturers, especially in the electric guitar field, but it's very hard to break in because of all these things.

*How well does the average private inventor understand the manufacturing process?*

**Peavey:** A lot of these guys come in with the faces of cherubs inscribed on their guitar or something—it's just not do-able from a production standpoint. A lot of them are in love with sharp points, but flowing them things down a production line could get you into trouble. Points could get knocked off or dented, or you could have trouble buffing it. So a hot-shit design ain't enough. You've got to ask: Is it *producible?* At least, that's what you've got to consider if you're approaching a company with a big operation.

*How can a designer find out ahead of time if an idea is producible?*

**Peavey:** Go to your friendly woodworking shop and say, hey, could you make me one of these? Don't even tell him what it is. Tell him it's a footstool. If the friendly woodworker falls over backwards, you're in trouble. Ninety percent of the problems are related to that—these shapes are straight out of *Batman & Robin.*

**Ovation:** We get very few ideas that are what you could call professional quality. Inventors don't realize the production problems involved with a body that has all those compound curves.

*But can't a major manufacturer cut costs by producing large volumes?*

**Ovation:** It's a misconception. The inventor usually believes that through mass manufacturing, his thing can be produced at a low cost. It's just a big generalization, and it's much more complicated than that. They

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A GPI Publication

## SUBMITTING IDEAS

rarely take into account the pricing structures, the dealers, the distributors, the markups.

**B. C. Rich:** The bizarre designs can be done on a custom basis, but a lot of people get too exotic, and it becomes impossible to manufacture their guitars as production-line instruments. It's too expensive.

*What are the costs involved?*

**Ovation:** Just to tool up you could be talking $50,000 or $100,000. That's right up front for production set-up alone—forget the advertising and the marketing costs. There are tools, molds, production space, personnel considerations, accounting, and so on.

*Aside from production and marketing, what are some other financial considerations that can affect guitar design?*

**B. C. Rich:** Some of the best advice I've had is to use your weakest point as your strongest point, to make the best of what you already have in the way of materials. Martin had a weak point, a wood shortage. So they realized that they should push the three-piece back, because they could use smaller pieces of wood and save some money. They pushed the D-35 as their new model, and it became one of their most popular guitars.

*Does the private designer have a prayer?*

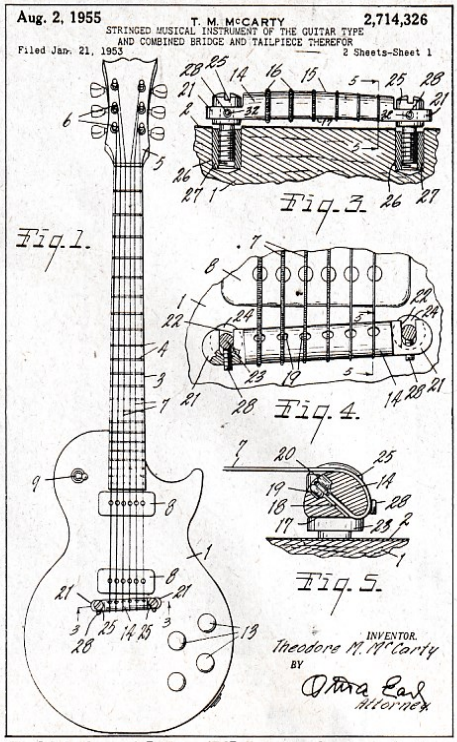
**Turner:** I think the idea of taking ideas to the major firms is rather impractical. They have more ideas in the can than they know what to do with. I'm not saying that you couldn't hit with something really spectacular, but most of these ideas that are going to revolutionize the business don't, won't, and can't. That leaves you with going to a smaller company, or doing it yourself.

*In addition to design, what should the aspiring designer study?*

**Turner:** One thing you have to know is materials and materials usage. This is a touchy subject bordering on some of the controversy that was started by that American Guitar series, but he's got to understand markups. I don't know if this is an industry standard, but in my opinion the cost of materials should be about 12% or less of the retail price of the thing in order for a major company to get interested. The ratio can go a bit higher for a smaller company.

*How much do inventors need to know about tooling and production techniques?*

**Turner:** Well, suppose you're going to have a hole for a pickup. Is it going to be punched, routed, or drilled? Each way of doing something has its own cost, advantages, disadvantages, and required materials and know-how. It doesn't matter whether you're talking wood, metal, plastic, or anything else, you've got to figure out how the thing is going to be milled, routed, cast, or whatever. If possible, the contours and radii and internal cuts have to match standard, off-the-shelf router bits and mill cutters and stuff like that. Fixturing—you have to know how the thing is going to be jigged up for




*Ted McCarty's [Nov. 78] Les Paul guitar design.*

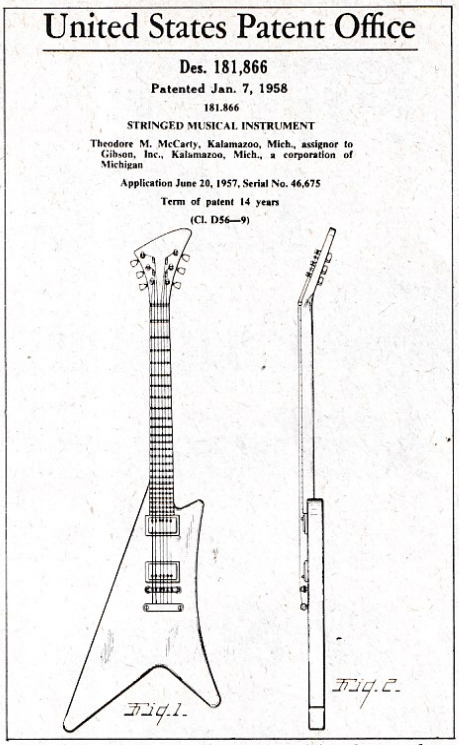
production. You don't have to be experienced in all these things to design a good guitar, but you have to be aware of them if you're going to talk business with a manufacturer. Maybe you should be willing to work with a production engineer to redesign the product and make it practical to produce.

*Ben Franklin said that the first mistake in public business is the going into it. Was he right?*

**Turner:** Well, if you're going to be in business for yourself after being turned down by the other guys, you've got to learn that the dream alone is not enough. You've got to have a marketing plan, a company structure, cash-flow projections, and all that. You've got to know the cost of every tool, every machine. How much inventory is going to stay in stock? If you make X dollars, how much can you take out to spend on new equipment? How much on advertising?

*So the manufacturer is deciding whether to spend his money on an ad in* Guitar Player *or a new sander.*

**Turner:** Right. He's got a lot of things to think about other than body shapes and pickups. So any inventor who's going into business for himself or with a manufacturer should be aware of these things. The manufacturer will want to know the costs of materials to build your guitar, literally down to the penny. He has to. He might not expect you to know all that, but you should expect him to be considering it. Understand the costs of production, and don't be pissed off at the markup structure that exists in the world. I mean, yeah, it's terrible, but you just have to live with it, work around it. The more you can communicate to the manufacturer, the better. Learn his language a little bit. Get some answers ready. How many is he going to have to produce to make a profit, and so on. A designer should also have some idea of the financial setup. Is the manufac-



United States Patent Office

Des. 181,866

Patented Jan. 7, 1958

181,866

STRINGED MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

Theodore M. McCarty, Kalamazoo, Mich., assignor to Gibson, Inc., Kalamazoo, Mich., a corporation of Michigan

Application June 20, 1957, Serial No. 46,675

Term of patent 14 years

(Cl. D56—9)

Fig. 1.

Fig. 2.

*Gibson's Moderne — too radical for the market.*

turer supporting himself, or does he have a corporate backer or a private investor or what, and how do you fit in?

**Ovation:** We were a major manufacturer of aircraft assemblies prior to our entry into the guitar market. There's no question that Ovation [a division of the Kaman organization] would not have been successful if it weren't for Mr. Kaman and the tremendous input of the Kaman aerospace division—the money, the research and development, and so on. We simply owed our existence for the first five years or so to Kaman aircraft.

*Where can the inventor go once he's been turned down by the major companies?*

**Turner:** Get real good connections with some people in the Orient, and have the guitars made for you. I'm not necessarily being facetious—there are Americans who design guitars to be made in Japan and Korea. I would imagine that within the next five to ten years we'll see guitars built in mainland China, which is the "next Korea" in my opinion.

*As Korean factories were to Japan?*

**Turner:** Yeah, and as Japan was to Chicago [*laughs*]. Someone is going to figure out how to do business in China and just do gangbuster kind of stuff. Guitar designers might start thinking about that now. The one other alternative to getting *some* company to do it for you—large or small, foreign or domestic—is to bite the bullet, slap together a good resume, and go to work for one of these other guys. One of the problems with a lot of people is that they're one-shot designers. If you're a true professional, where you just keep coming up with new ideas, then you might be very valuable to a Gibson, a Rickenbacker, or a Fender. It's something to keep in mind. [*Ed. Note: See the July '79 issue's article on guitar research engineers.*]

# PETER LANG

## Eminent Midwestern 6- and 12-String Fingerstylist

**By Jim Ohlschmidt**

LIVING IN MINNEAPOLIS, Minnesota, may give you a sense of humor: It's bone-chilling in the winter, and scorching hot in the summer. The extremes of climate are enough to temper even the hardiest of people, and it's just that much easier to take if you do it with a good outlook. Fingerstylist Peter Lang keeps his blues- and folk-based style in perspective, and while being a technician on his 6- and 12-string guitars, he is also an impromptu comedian onstage. He will play an entire set of songs that spellbind the audience with clever, melodic intricacies, and while tuning up he will ramble at length on such subjects as the origins of certain commonplace words, or where methane gas really comes from.

Although Lang's playing incorporates refined blues and bottleneck styles, as well as some elements of folk music, his approach is fresh, individual, and far from derivative. Not content to limit himself strictly to acoustic guitar, he fingerpicks a guitar synthesizer and a mandolin as well. He has appeared on record with Leo Kottke [*GP*, Aug. '77] and John Fahey [Apr. '72]—two of his closest contemporaries—and also in solo contexts. In 1977 his third of five albums, *Lycurgus, The Wolf Driver*, was nominated for a Grammy award.

Currently Peter is working on new material, playing at colleges and clubs, and teaching at the West Bank School of Music in Minneapolis. Transcriptions of many of his songs are available from John Stropes [1522 E. Kane Pl., Milwaukee, WI 53202].

Peter Lang received his first guitar, a Kay student model, in 1959 when he was 11. This wasn't his first instrument, though, as he had been playing trumpet in a grade-school band. He had long been fascinated with acoustic guitar music and with the folk revival of the late '50s, but he couldn't persuade his parents to get him a guitar. "Instead, they wanted me to pursue being a trumpet player," he recalls. "But they did get me a ukulele. It was a lot of fun, but it wasn't very versatile. The only books available for uke music at the time were things like *Arthur Godfrey Plays The Hits Of Hawaii*. I finally convinced my parents to buy a guitar. The strings were about a half-inch off the fingerboard, and from that guitar I developed some bad habits that are still with me. It was nice of my folks to get it, but a lot of people don't realize the bad habits you can pick up from a poor instrument. I used that guitar for about four years, until I got a Gibson J-45."

During his early development Peter was influenced by many different musicians, the majority of whom were folk players. At first, he used a flatpick exclusively; in fact, it wasn't until age 15 that Lang became interested in fingerpicking. That was when the young student first heard guitarists John Koerner and Dave "Snaker" Ray, and harpist Tony Glover—a trio of local musicians who later received national recognition. Lang was also impressed by Bob Dylan's first album, *Bob Dylan* [Columbia, 8579]. "I listened primarily to slick, white, urban folk music done by white, urban folkies," he says. "Here were people trying to accurately portray the American form the way it had originally been done. I thought it was incredible. The fellow who taught me to fingerpick, John Franzine, is now an instructor at the West Bank School Of Music. When I wanted to learn how to fingerpick, I took lessons from him for about five months—until I figured out how to do it myself—and then I took off on my own. From Koerner, Ray, and Glover I began listening to other white blues artists like Dave Van Ronk [*GP*, Mar. '71] and John Hammond, Jr. [Mar. '73], and eventually the black artists they were emulating, such as John Hurt and Reverend Gary Davis [*GP*, June '76]."

Lang played blues exclusively for the next three years, until about 1966, when as a result of feeling confined he began to branch into different kinds of instrumentals. He also found that his playing didn't fit too well in a group context; he was kicked out of a band he had started for "playing strange country music."

Occasionally, Peter worked as a backup musician and opened for other acts, but his career as a professional solo performer didn't begin until 1969 when he moved to California. At first he played solely for his own enjoyment, but a number of his friends heard him and said that they could find work for him. "Up until then I had been a closet musician," he says. "Then—*bingo!*—it all took off from there. It was crazy the way things picked up. Soon I had some people managing me, and we went around to record companies with a demo tape. I went to Vanguard Records, and they said, 'We're not doing anything like this at the moment, but why don't you try Takoma Records in Santa Monica?' That was in 1971, and I was living in Venice, California—they were practically next door. John Fahey was in charge, and I signed a contract and went to work for them. Then everything *really* started to take off."

In 1972 Peter recorded his first album, *The Thing At The Nursery Room Window*, a collection of his acoustic solo works. It includes "R.C. Rag," a very fast number

transcribed in its entirety on page 47. The remainder of the album is by and large less frantically paced, but the intricate fingerpicking never lets up.

The first album's release in 1973 led to Peter's appearance on *Leo Kottke, Peter Lang, John Fahey*, a collection consisting of four songs by each guitarist. Lang's contribution placed him among the ranks of his more established contemporaries. A year later, he returned from California to the Twin Cities area (Minneapolis/St. Paul), and recorded *Lycurgus, The Wolf Driver* for Flying Fish Records. On this album, released in 1975, Peter was joined by several top-notch Minneapolis musicians including Cal Hand on dobro and pedal steel guitar, Butch Thompson on piano and clarinet, and Peter Ostrousko on mandolin, was a transitional LP for Peter: All of his previous works had been for solo guitar, but this album featured not only solo pieces, but also ensemble instrumentals and, for the first time, Lang's gruff vocals.

In the next two years, Peter toured extensively throughout the Midwest and South, got married, and again changed record companies. In 1977 Waterhouse Records released a live album entitled *Prime Cuts*, which featured Peter's solo performances in coffeehouses in Austin, Texas, and Ames, Iowa. The audiences were enthusiastic to the point of being noisy, but the album nonetheless captures the guitarist's wit, as well as some of his most brilliant playing, especially on "Angel Of Baffins Bay" and Joseph Spence's "There Will Be A Happy Meeting."

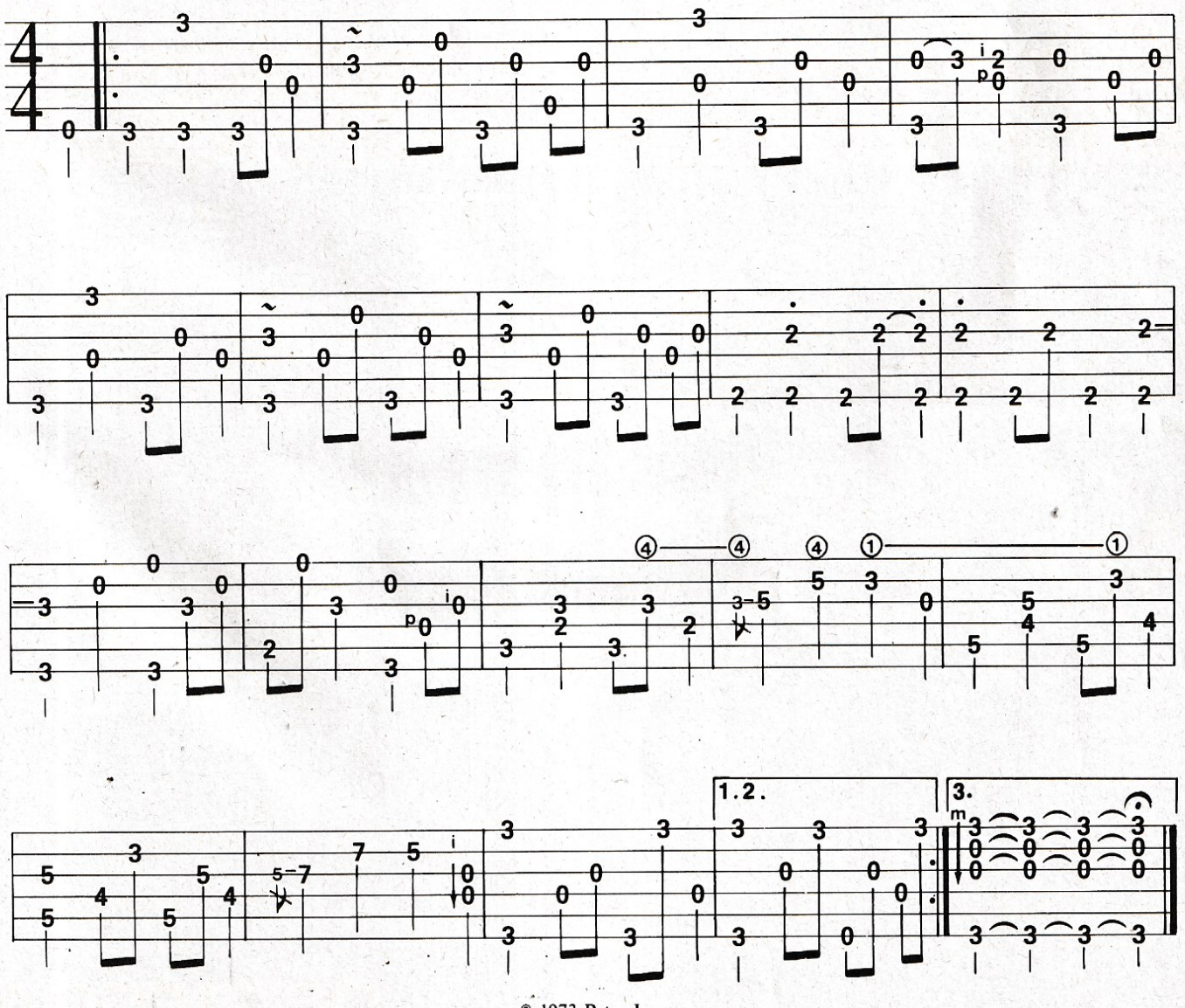
In March 1979 Lang's fifth album, *Back To The Wall*, was released. As on *Lycurgus*, he was accompanied by outstanding musicians, including bassist Gary Lopac, pedal steel guitarist Jeff Dayton, and vocalists Prudence Johnson, Tom Lieberman, and Tim Sparks. On this album Peter played a few slide tunes—not unusual for him, since he had done so on his earlier records—but now the technique was more refined and graceful. He uses a Harris slide and Sears Craftsman deep-socket wrenches. But despite his occasional use of slide, he is not partial to it; in fact, he considers his slide work a novelty. "I feel that you can't be very

*Continued*

# "R.C. Rag"

Peter Lang's "R. C. Rag" is a 51-second piece that requires the guitar to be tuned in its standard configuration, except three half-steps lower. That is, the open strings should be tuned (low to high) *C♯, F♯, B, E, G♯*, and *C♯*. The music shown below is repeated three times at a quick pace, using the first ending for the first two times through, and the ending marked "3" for the final time through. The song is recorded on Lang's *The Thing At The Nursery Room Window*.

♩=288 **By Peter Lang** **Transcribed by John Stropes**



## PETER LANG

precise or creative with it," he says, "but people have always been asking me, 'Why don't you do more slide guitar?' So I figured, 'Okay, I'll do it,' and I got back into it. If I were to start playing more slide as a serious part of my repertoire I would probably get into lap style, because it eliminates the fret buzz and a lot of other problems associated with bottleneck playing on a regular guitar."

To reinforce various tonalities while setting different moods, Lang uses standard, dropped *D*, and several common open tunings such as *G, C,* and *D*. But on songs such as "Young Man, Young Man Look At Your Shoes" [from *The Thing At The Nursery Room Window*], "Lycurgus" [from *Lycurgus, The Wolf Driver*], and "My Dear Mary Anne" [*Back To The Wall*] he uses variations on the open tunings. "I'm always looking for new ones," he states. "There are a number of songs in which I use the same tunings, too—this helps to eliminate the problem of changing after each song onstage. I use a *C9th* [actually a partial *Cadd9*: *C, G, C, G, C, D,* low to high] quite a bit. I also use a *G9th* [a partial *Gadd9*] where the *B* string is tuned down to an *A* [*D, G, D, G, A, D,* low to high]. Then there's the *D9th* [a partial *Dadd9*] with its *F#* changed to an *E* [*D, A, D, E, A, D,* low to high]. I often think that I use a lot of tunings that other people don't use, but I'm sometimes surprised; I'll bump into someone who will already know the one I'm playing on. On 'Lycurgus,' I used *D, A, D, E, C, D* [low to high], which is really odd. I don't even know what it is. I believe it's actually a combination of two tunings that you can modulate between, and when you play them together you get some strange sounds. [*Ed. Note: It could also be thought of as a* D9.] I also use an *E* tuning [*E, G#, B, E, B, E,* low to high]."

As a fingerstylist, Lang disagrees with the philosophies of some of his contemporaries—most notably Ry Cooder [*GP*, Mar. '80] and Leo Kottke—in that he feels that picks are neither an unnecessary appendage nor a bother. He explains, "I seem to have heard that Leo quit using picks because Ry Cooder told him it was like taking a bath with your socks on, or something. I don't subscribe to that at all. If you grow your fingernails long, you've got built-in picks. Most classical players use their fingernails. I use light Dunlop fingerpicks on my index and middle fingers, and a Herco thumbpick. I keep the picks very close to the ends of my fingers, and attack the string with the side of the pick instead of the front, so it *slides* rather than pulls. I think that by using fingerpicks you can be just as precise and just as dynamic, and get as broad a range of sounds—perhaps not quite as soft, but certainly much louder and with more control. There are some people who don't use picks at all—just their thumb and finger pads. John Hurt dug his fingers into the strings, plucking and snapping them. Taj Mahal [*GP*, Apr. '74] uses his fingers. But I think that one is fooling himself if he thinks he can use only his fingers and get the same dynamics that are possible with picks. You can use a pick a lot of different ways."

Peter leaves his two fingerpicks in stock condition, but alters his thumbpick so that it will have the right amount of flexibility without being too soft. He first sands it almost as thin as a flatpick. Next he burns it down so that it protrudes only a few thousandths of an inch beyond the end of his thumb. This, he explains, allows him to feel the pluck of the pick against the string. "My hands are small, and my nails are very thin," he says. "If I tried to grow my nails long and use them to pick with, I'd break them all the time. I think that one should get used to playing with the same set all the time, though. I presently have a set of fingerpicks that I've had for the past year-and-a-half, and my thumbpick I've had for about a year."

Lang's fingerpicking also extends to his occasional mandolin playing. When he first tried flatpicking on mandolin he found the sound too thin for his taste. "It's not that it has a *bad* sound," he adds, "but because it's so thin it's not very versatile." He tunes the *A* and *E* strings in unisons, the *D* strings one octave apart, and the *G* strings two octaves apart (by using an .008 guitar string for the highest-pitched string). As a result, he has found that the mandolin's range and dynamics were enhanced sufficiently to accommodate his fingerpicking style.

Besides his 1919 Gibson A-4 mandolin,

*Continued*

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## PETER LANG

Peter has a Washburn Raven electric and several acoustic guitars; among them are two custom-made instruments by Bozo Podunavac. One, a 6-string built in 1973, is Lang's choice for most songs requiring a mellower tone. The other is a 34-fret double-cutaway 12-string. Its neck joins the body at the 26th fret, and instead of one large round hole it has a pair of smaller ones. Peter feels that the extra frets and expanded access area afford him new possibilities, particularly when playing slide or using a capo. His other guitars are a late- '50s small-body Epiphone 12-string, a Gibson Hummingbird, a Taylor 6-string jumbo, a Washburn 6-string, and an Ibanez Artwood 60 acoustic. For his 6-strings he prefers a mahogany body instead of rosewood, saying that since mahogany is a softer wood, the tone is mellower. He is less discriminating in his choice of 12-string materials because he doesn't think the difference is that noticeable.

To amplify his acoustics onstage, Lang usually chooses a microphone as his link to the PA. But in cases where feedback is a problem, he employs the Barcus-Berry Hot-Dot pickups built into each guitar, or either a Bartolini Hi-A or a Shadow pickup. When using the Hot-Dots or the Hi-A, he employs a Sescom [12931 Budlong, Gardena, CA 90247] direct box.

To keep his handmade Bozo guitars free from harm, he takes only his Gibson and Epiphone to concerts. The Bozos, he says, are oversized, and therefore are difficult to properly fit with strong cases. However, the other guitars are standard-sized and have hardshell cases to protect them from the airlines, truckers, etc.

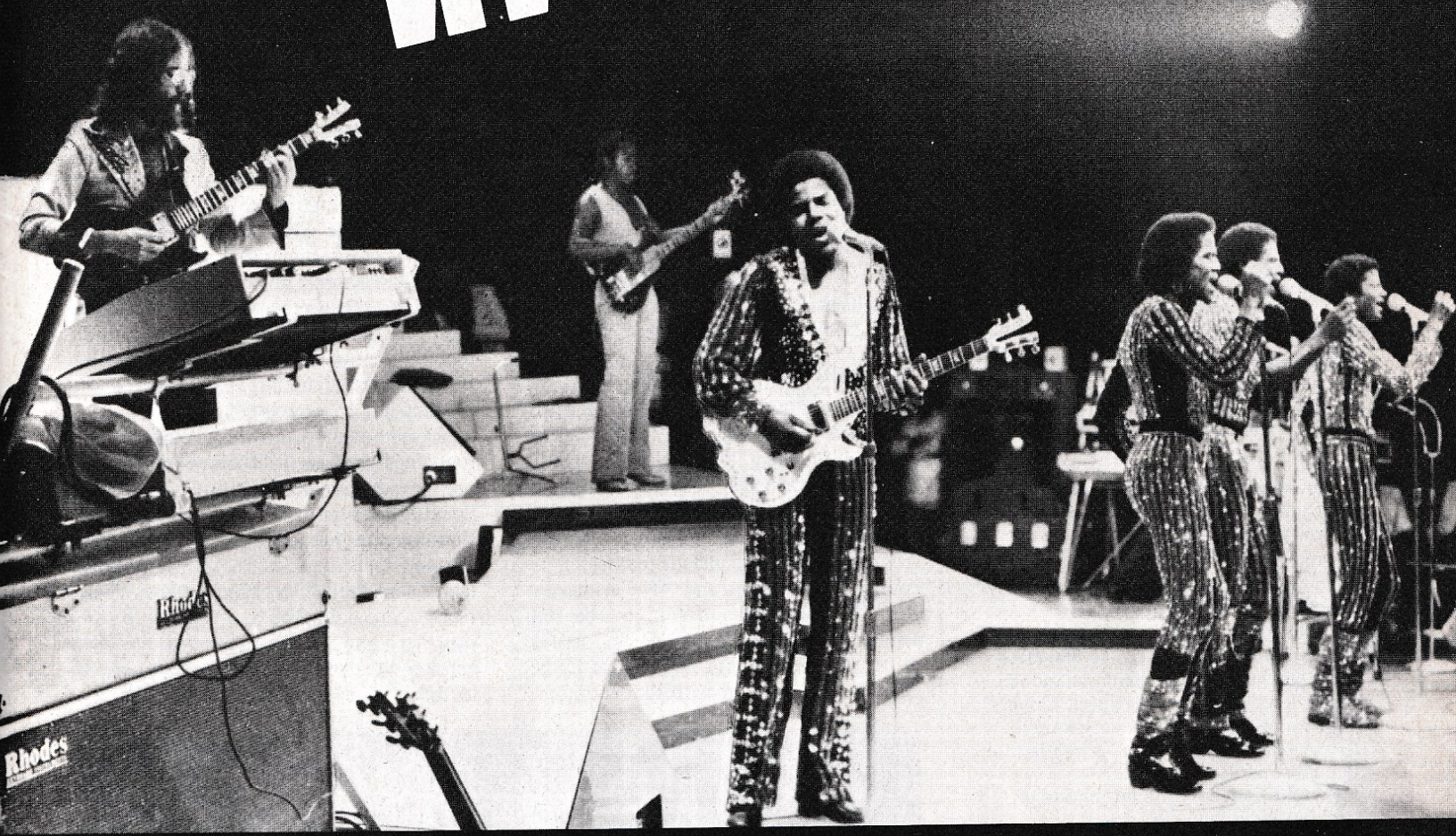
Recently, Peter has been using Bozo strings on his acoustics, although he uses D'Angelicos on the road: "I can get them anywhere," he says. He also likes Nashville Straights because of their plastic packaging, which he feels helps prevent corrosion when they're just sitting on a shelf or in the case. Until a few years ago, he experimented with various combinations of gauges in order to get an even tone and response. "I think for the best sound one might make up their own sets," he states. "I used to use Fender nickel-wrapped strings, and I would place very heavy ones on the bass end, starting with about a .058, working my way to medium-gauge strings in the middle, and then light strings on top. This gives a tremendous amount of bass. I started to have problems with my finger joints, though, due to an injury I suffered playing volleyball; I was also practicing an incredible amount of time. While I was preparing for *The Thing At The Nursery Room Window* I was practicing seven hours a day, seven days a week. And at that point I realized that sound was a lot more dependent on the recording equipment or the PA that you happen to be using, rather than the instrument. I thought it would be better to sacrifice a bit of sound for the comfort of the hands."

On Peter's latest album, *Back To The Wall*, he added electric guitar and guitar synthesizer, departing from his primarily acoustic format—but only slightly. He emphasizes that his use of the electric instruments was not for lead purposes, but rather as enhancers for the acoustics. His subtle use of effects is most clearly illustrated on "Going Down The China Road," for which he ran his acoustic guitar's sound through an Electro-Harmonix Frequency Analyzer, a Ross Distortion Booster, a Mu-tron Micro V envelope-following filter, and an old Wollensak tape recorder (which acted as an echo unit). This signal was then sent to a small PA system set up in the recording room with Peter. His acoustic guitar was miked in the foreground, and the effect-enhanced sound shimmered in the background, giving a thicker texture without being overbearing.

When using the synthesizer, Peter tried to keep its presence low-key, as he had with the effects. "I was a little leery when I used the Roland [GS/GR-500] synthesizer because a lot of people are purists, and they might think of it in a bad light," he explains. "I played with it for three weeks before going into the studio so that I wouldn't be adding it just because I was enamored with the new sounds. I don't see anything wrong with

*Continued*

# Kramer in concert...

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## PETER LANG

using it, though. The guitar is merely a vehicle for conveying music, and technology is such that one may avail himself of a variety of sounds and expand the dynamics of the instrument almost infinitely. So, if the technology is there, why not use it? I only used the synthesizer as reinforcement; at no point did it take the main stage with the guitar itself. The Roland has four sections, and I used the 'guitar' mode as the dominant sound. For example, on 'Colored Aristocracy,' I played the entire song acoustically, and then overdubbed the synthesizer in its 'polybass' mode. It created a kind of low, bubbling sound."

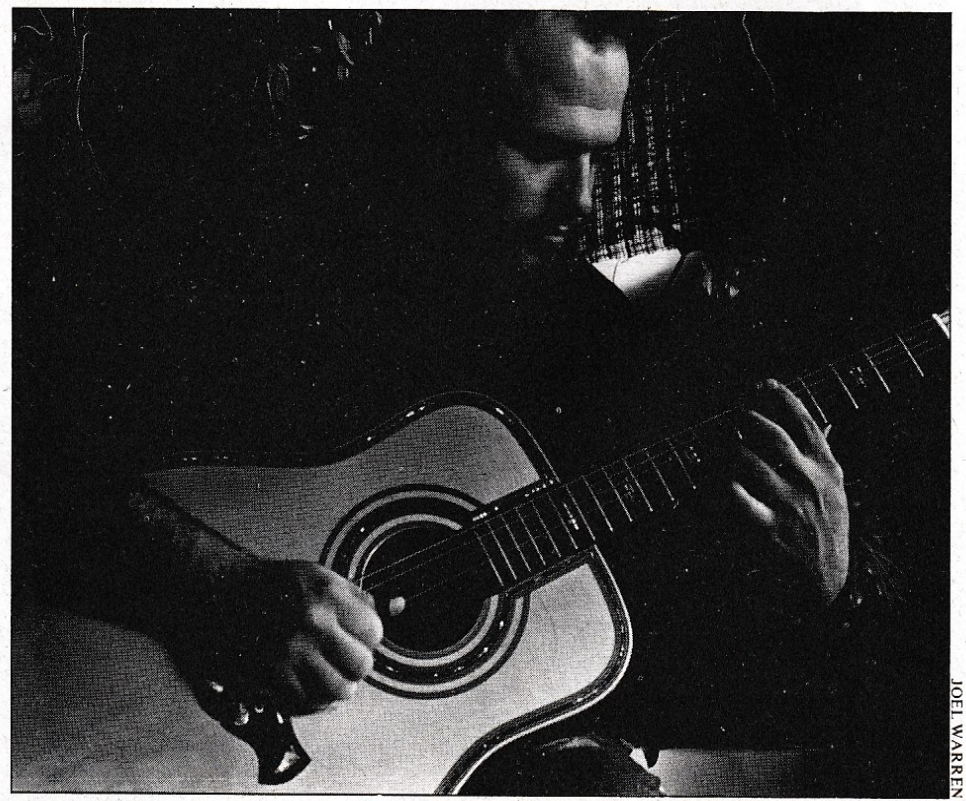
The usefulness of the synthesizer was enhanced by its ability to emulate other instruments. On "Jimmy Bell," the "sax" mode was employed, while on "Country Blues Medley," Lang chose a timbre that is a blend of a horn and a banjo. The synthesizer also provided a pump organ-like sound on "This World Is Not My Home." Peter explains, "I learned that song at a Baptist boys' camp, and I've always loved it. I had always heard it with a pump organ, so I decided to put it on."

Flexibility has helped Lang's career follow a steady pattern of development, and even after a decade of performing he doesn't feel he's reached his peak yet. When he recorded *Leo Kottke, Peter Lang, John Fahey* in the early '70s he felt as though he had indeed reached a peak and was as proficient as he could be. In fact, his playing had become very polished, but shortly after that record he began to conclude that technique is only a means to an end: "The art itself is the message. You must have a certain amount of technique, but you can sacrifice a tremendous amount of message by becoming too involved with that technique. Up to a certain point, you are a technician, but then you must become an artist. One of the problems with a great number of musicians is that they never go beyond technique. The more technically proficient they become, the better guitarists they think they are—which is, of course, absolute balderdash. Art is an expression of humanity. Technique is the antithesis of that, because the more technical you become, and the more mechanical your playing is, the farther away from humanity you become.

"Now, listening to someone like Taj Mahal is fun. He can be sloppy, but by God his music feels good. There's so much life in it. And if the music feels good, you don't even hear the technique. You transcend the medium, and it becomes art."

Peter believes that the tendency of many artists to overemphasize technique results largely from their creative insecurities. Consequently, much of the life is left out of the finished product, be it a song, a painting, or any other art work. "I know I'm going to get flak for this," he says, "but you see this particularly in classical musicians. The technique involved in classical guitar is so difficult that an artist is often measured by his ability to flash it. You see it in other forms of music, too. It's how fast or how high you can stack it. But does it create emotion? Does it feel good? Or is it just an exercise?"

Despite all the controversy Peter sees surrounding it, he feels that "new wave" music is one form that is indeed concerned with emotional expression, rather than mere demonstrations of technical virtuosity: "Even if that emotion is just base, or raw energy, at least there's something there; it's not sterile. When I first heard John Fahey, I thought, 'I can play that—and I can play it faster.' But as I've gone on, I've developed a tremendous respect for John because he has transcended the me-



JOEL WARREN

dium. He exposes raw nerve endings onstage." This sense for what feels good musically came to Lang many years ago when he emulated blues masters, picking up their licks and techniques. Keeping his emotions in touch with his music, his criteria for *Back To The Wall* was "did it feel good?" rather than "was the recording perfect?"

In the last five years Peter has been most influenced by Bahamian fingerstylist Joseph Spence. "He has a very interesting style in that his thumb plays involved bass lines," Lang notes. "One of the keynotes of basic fingerstyle is that the thumb is very dead; it plays rhythm and nothing else. Joseph Spence's thumb often plays melodies and sometimes breaks up the rhythm."

John Fahey's choice of various rhythmic patterns and dissonant harmonies in his chording impressed Lang when he first heard him in 1972. "I never really thought of dissonance as melody until I listened to John," he states. "But then I discovered that dissonance can be very melodic. Listening to music—not just for the guitar, either—gives me ideas. I've developed an interest in South American, Mexican, and Mediterranean styles, and I've experimented with them."

Even though Peter Lang keeps an open mind and constantly tries new techniques, he doesn't force these concepts into songs right away. He tries to relax, play, and see what comes of it. "Creativity isn't something you work at," he says. "It's something that *happens*. It can't be pushed, because the harder you try to be creative, the less creative you actually become. My creativity comes out when I'm relaxed or happy—just experimenting or fooling with the guitar. Sometimes I come upon part of a melody that grabs me, and I will work with it. And if I get tired of it, I will just store it away. Then over a period of time I may come up with another melody that gives me a similar feeling, so I'll piece them together and eventually get a song.

"'Future Shot At The Rainbow' [from *The Thing At The Nursery Room Window*] took three-and-a-half years to write. Now, I didn't spend three-and-a-half years writing it; it was just a synthesis that took place over that period of time. 'Flames Along The Monongahela' [from *Lycurgus*] took about four years. There were themes that fit together and become a song. Ironically, there are days when it all comes together at once. 'Turnpike Terror' [*Nursery Room Window*] was written in one day. 'As I Lay Sleeping' and 'St. Charles Shuffle' [both from *Leo Kottke, Peter Lang, John Fahey*] are one-day tunes. They're very immediate and fun. Sometimes it happens and sometimes it doesn't. Also, I seem to enter a creative period after practicing for a couple of hours. My chops reach a certain level, and I veer off and become creative."

One of Peter's projects today is writing a book on fingerstyle guitar with John Stropes, a guitar instructor at the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music. The intention, according to

*Continued*

## PETER LANG

Lang, is to elevate the idiom and expose it as a very serious and credible form of playing. "People don't realize it's the oldest American guitar form," he says. "We've only recently come up with a term for it: 'classic American fingerstyle guitar.' I talked to John Fahey and he agreed on the name. For years he's been calling it 'American primitive guitar.' His term 'primitive' was patterned after the French primitive painters who were untutored. Classic American fingerstyle guitar developed around the turn of the eighteenth century—it's very old. And It's an important part of America's heritage that few people seem to be aware of. When most people think of traditional guitar, they think of bluegrass, or flatpicking style. Classic American fingerstyle predates that by over 140 years. The term 'bluegrass' is new; I think it was about 1940 that it really came into existence. We're hoping to make people aware of the antiquity and importance of fingerpicking."

According to Peter, the style known as European salon guitar first developed as bourgeois parlor music, and was played using two fingers, rather than three. It reached its zenith in about 1870, but almost died out with the advent of ragtime piano. "In the colonial period, the guitar was very popular because you couldn't get pianos and harpsichords in the U.S.," he says. "Everyone could have a guitar, as it was very portable. Gradually, piano companies developed over here, and more and more pianos were imported until the guitar was no longer in favor.

"The blacks took fingerstyle guitar music and added their own influences," he says, "and at that point we had the blues and ragtime—that's where people generally associate the origins of fingerstyle guitar. John Stropes has found a number of old songs from the mid 1800s that sound as if they're only a couple of years old. There are some that he performs which sound exactly like John Fahey: timing, syncopation, and so forth."

Lang views his future as a guitarist optimistically, while placing no bets on what direction his music will take. "It's like life itself," he says. "What you expect seldom happens, and what you least expect happens quite a bit. You toss your bread out on the water and see what happens. I assume that my music will indeed change and grow, and if I'm happy, then the music will go well and be happy. But it really doesn't matter so much from a commercial aspect. I haven't had a lot of commercial success, so I don't think that's the important part. I think what's really important is the fact that other people enjoy my music. Most of all, music to me is primarily a therapy. It's a way for me to get inside and kick my guts around a little." ■

TERRY HILDEBRAND

*Lang with his Bozo 34-fret 12 string.*

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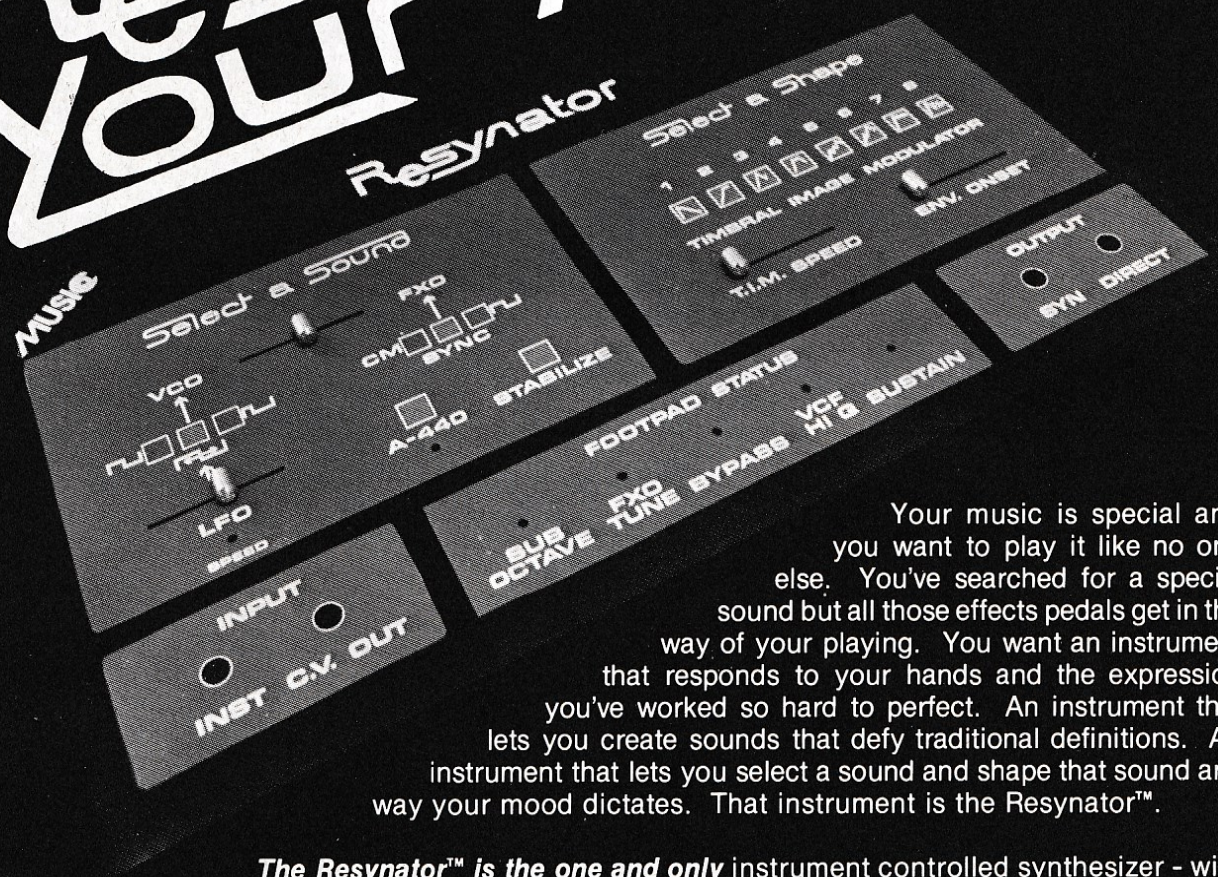


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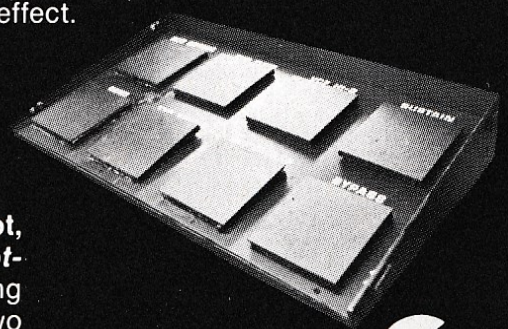


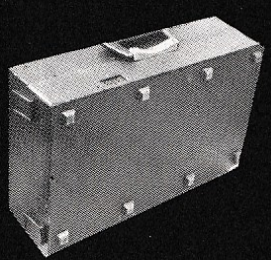

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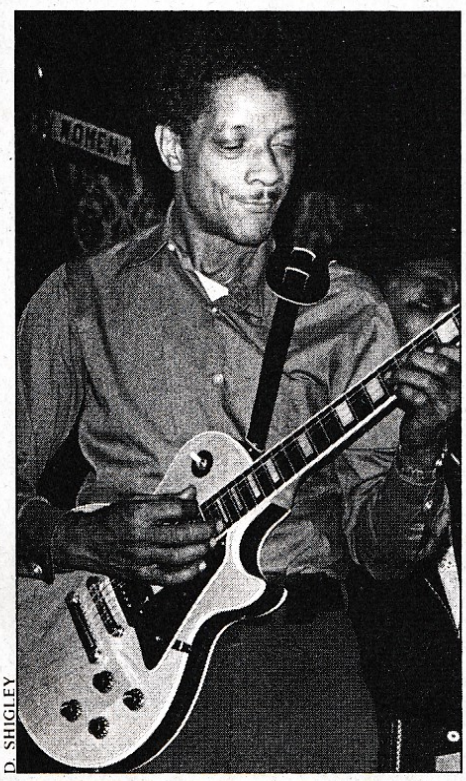
# Chicago Blues Legend HUBERT SUMLIN


D. SHIGLEY

## Howlin' Wolf's Sideman

**By Dan Forte**

WHEN IT COMES TO the unsung heroes of the blues—of which there are hundreds—Hubert Sumlin would have to be among the main contenders for top honors. Ironically, the man who provided the singing guitar on the original recordings of such blues standards as "Spoonful," "Killing Floor," "The Red Rooster," "Back Door Man," "Wang-Dang Doodle," and "Smokestack Lightnin'" [all on *Howlin' Wolf*] has yet to record an album under his own name in his own country. And although Jimi Hendrix [*GP* Sept. '75] once cited Sumlin as his favorite guitarist, Hubert's influence on rock guitarists in general has never been as strongly felt as that of T-Bone Walker [Mar. '77], Albert King [Sept. '77], B.B. King [Mar. '75], or Freddie King [Jan. '77].

For 23 years Sumlin's unique guitar playing was a trademark of one of the most popular and influential Chicago-based bands under the leadership of Chester Arthur Burnett, better known as Howlin' Wolf. After playing for a brief time in Memphis with harmonicist James Cotton, Hubert joined Wolf's band in 1953 when the legendary singer brought him to Chicago. There he remained until Wolf's death in 1976, his only break coming in the mid-'50s when he joined Muddy Waters's [Mar. '70] band for a year.

Although Sumlin's licks have never been a staple among most rockers' guitar vocabulary, his influence has surfaced from time to time, most notably in Peter Green's early work with Fleetwood Mac. In his essay on pop music in the January '77 issue of *GP*, Frank Zappa singled out Sumlin as being one of the perpetrators of good guitar work in the '50s. And in the March '78 *GP* Irish rocker Rory Gallagher listed him as a major influence. In reference to *The London Howlin' Wolf Sessions*, which he appeared on, Eric Clapton [July '76] stated that one of the reasons he agreed to do the album in the first place was so he could work with Sumlin. "For a long time," Clapton volunteered, "I'd really wanted to meet his [Wolf's] guitarist, Hubert Sumlin, because he did some things that freaked me out when I was picking up the guitar—that stuff on 'Goin' Down Slow' [out of print], just the weirdest playing. He's truly amazing!"

With Wolf, Sumlin made his first of many European tours, and once there he finally had an opportunity to record as a leader. In this context, Hubert not only proved an expressive blues singer—with his plaintive vocal style mirroring his bashful offstage demeanor—but also showed that his roots reached back to his rural beginnings in Mississippi. On acoustic guitar he displayed a rhythmic style recalling John Lee Hooker [Feb. '72]. On electric guitar Sumlin's staccato attacks, extroverted slides, and unique style of playing fills, bass lines, and repeated riffs interspersed with only an occasional chord were perfect complements to Howlin' Wolf's rhythmic style and penchant for songs with no chord changes at all. Wolf's gravelly, demonic growl coupled with Sumlin's hypnotic riffs and occasional solo outbursts could only be described as haunting.

One of 13 children, Sumlin was born on November 16, 1931, in Greenwood, Mississippi, and raised in Hughes, Arkansas—a town about 35 minutes from West Memphis, Arkansas. He started playing drums at age ten, and took up the guitar a year later with an eight-dollar acoustic his mother bought him. "I got an older brother named A.D. Smith on my father's side," Sumlin recalls, "and he was playing way before me. So I tried to get him to learn me how to play. But he wouldn't learn me a tune or nothing, and we got to fighting four or five times because of that. Of course, I got whupped every time because I was small [*laughs*]. So I watched what he was doing and got me one tune. Then my mind started getting together, you know, so I ended up with four or five tunes."

Although the first musicians he listened to were jazz players such as trumpeter Louis Armstrong, one of the first guitarists Hubert was exposed to as a child was the man he would later spend 23 years of his performing life with. He remembers, "When I first went to see Wolf, he put me out of the place. I'd crawl up under people's legs and get thrown out the door. That didn't stop me, though; I got some Coca-Cola crates as tall as I could get them, and I was sitting up there, rocking and reeling, till somebody pulled the crates out from under me [*laughs*]. I was just a little dude who wanted to play and hear. I was maybe 12 years old when this started. I did this around Wolf for about two or three years. Finally he knew who I was. He said, 'Let him alone.' He set me in a chair beside [guitarist] Willie Johnson, the drummer, and him. I just sat right there, boy, rockin'. He made me sit in the chair where I wouldn't see no booze or nothing.

"One night he said, 'How'd you get out here tonight?' I just thumbed me a ride, you know. Then he said, 'Does your mama know you're out here? I'm gonna take you home.' I knew if I went back home I'd get two whuppings, but I loved the Wolf anyway. He took me back to my mama and talked to her, so I didn't get no whupping. Then I went back the next Friday night! I asked the lady at the door to ask Wolf if I could come in, and he said okay. Got a chair and sat up there with him. Stayed with him for more than 20 years later on."

A plantation field worker by day, young Hubert got in the habit of taking his guitar with him when he went to work. Ultimately, he remembers, this led to his getting a better instrument: "I'd put my guitar on my back, get on the tractor, and go down to the field. I'd plow about maybe two acres, then I'd just cut the tractor off and sit and play [*laughs*]. So this guy caught me playing the guitar behind the wheel. And he was so mad because I didn't plow but two acres, he took my guitar and broke it across the tractor. I got so mad I hit him upside the head, but that didn't do no good—he was bigger than I was. I was only about 14 years old. So I wasn't gonna work no more until I got me another guitar. Later my mother told this guy, 'What did you do that for?' He said, 'He should have been working.' My mother was sanctified, you know, really religious. And that was the first time I ever heard her *start* to cuss. So then this guy went and bought me a $20 guitar, but I had to promise that I wouldn't play it on my job. I still got the guitar; the strings are way up on it now. You can't even play it—I just look at it."

By the time Hubert was a couple of years into learning the guitar, he considered himself a jazz player. Circumstances, however, prompted his move to the blues. "I found I couldn't get jobs," he explains, "and I had to eat and sleep. So this is when I started thinking about playing something else." At age 18 he found his first professional job, playing second guitar for James Cotton. Cotton's first guitarist at the time was Pat Hare, who later in the '50s was part of Muddy Waters's Chicago-based band. Hubert spent close to three years in the Cotton band, touring Arkansas and

*Continued*

## HUBERT SUMLIN

Tennessee. He accompanied the harmonicist on a session for the Memphis-based Sun label, recording "I Ain't Gonna Pick No More Cotton" [out of print] sometime in 1953 or 1954.

In early 1954 Sumlin joined Howlin' Wolf's band for three weeks, playing in Mississippi, Tennessee, and a stint at the Silkhairs Club in West Memphis. "These guys he had working with him, such as Willie Johnson, was his regular band," he recalls. "I didn't know at the time that they was quitting. My first night of playing with him was in New Orleans. Then we played another job, still with his same old band, down south in Mississippi. We stayed in Memphis and then went through Tennessee. Then Wolf come by in this big old long limousine. He said, 'Hubert, I'm fixing to go to Chicago. I sold the band boys all my equipment. When I get to Chicago, if I need you, can I send for you?' I said yeah, but I didn't believe it. I went on. Sure enough, about two weeks later he sent for me."

On his arrival in Chicago, Sumlin was greeted by Wolf and Muddy Waters. He soon met many of the best-known bluesmen around town, including pianists Eddie Boyd, Memphis Slim, and Sunnyland Slim, harmonicist Little Walter, and guitarists Big Bill Broonzy [*GP*, Apr. '73], Elmore James, and Johnny Shines. Hubert became the second guitarist in Wolf's band. The other members of the band were Jody Williams, a lead guitarist who could also double on bass, piano, or drums; tenor saxophonist Abe Locke; drummer Early Phillips; and pianist Hosea Lee Kennard. At the time, Hubert remembers, Howlin' Wolf mainly sang and played harmonica, although he did pick up a guitar from time to time to teach the band new material.

STEVE SALIBO

*L-R: Hubert Sumlin, John Lee Hooker, and Eddie Taylor.*

Howlin' Wolf had signed a long-term recording contract with the Chess label, and in May 1954 Hubert accompanied him on "All Night Boogie," "Mr. Highway Man," "I'm The Wolf" [all out of print], "No Place To Go,", "Baby, How Long," "Evil Is Going On" [all on *Howlin' Wolf*], and several other sides. For a brief period later on in the year, Sumlin attended the Chicago Conservatory of Music:

*Continued*

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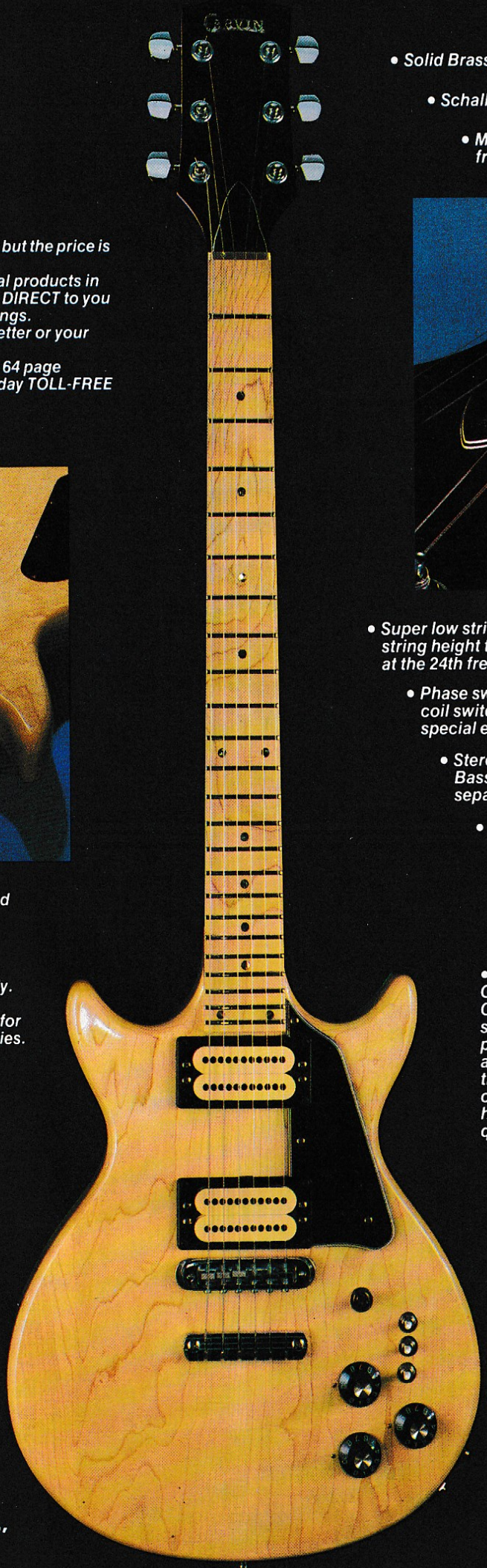

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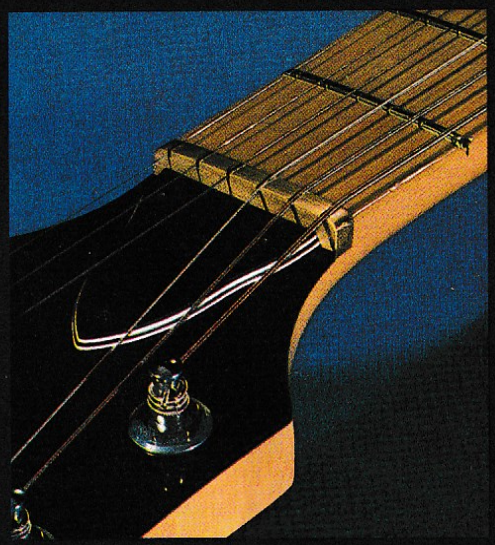

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## HUBERT SUMLIN

"I went to school for my scales and to know where I was on the guitar, to find out if I was right or not. The Chicago Conservatory was the only place I could find when I got there. They taught everything—jazz, blues, rock and roll, and so forth. I was kind of taught by different people before I made it to this school. So I went there and I really knew a little bit too much about guitar. I was sitting there playing and the teacher said, 'What did you come down here for?' I said, 'Well, I come down to learn my scales.' It didn't take too long, about four months. Then I just went back in my bag. I did learn how to read music, so I can read now if it's necessary. If it ain't necessary, I don't [*laughs*]. It's a thing that comes to any musician if he's interested and wants to go the right route—just like you're driving a car: You don't want to go two blocks down when you could go right through where you are."

In 1955 and 1956 Hubert recorded several more sides with Wolf, among them the now classic "Forty-Four" [*Howlin' Wolf*], "Don't Mess With My Baby" [out of print], and "Smokestack Lightnin'." Hubert explains that oftentimes he and Wolf would get together with bassist/songwriter Willie Dixon to work out material: "We would run a number down like this—with nobody but me and Willie and Wolf. It was quiet and we didn't have nobody else, so we knew what was gonna happen when we got the rest of the group in there." Friction, however, developed between Sumlin and Wolf, which led to Sumlin's quitting the band in 1956 to go on the road with Muddy Waters. "You know how musicians is," he says. "They have their little faults. I thought I had done got good enough to play what I want to play. And so Wolf was tryin' to help me all the time by telling me, 'No, you ain't—don't think you are the greatest, don't do this and don't do that.' I just got mad and quit.

"So I joined Muddy Waters's outfit and stayed with him a little more than a year. The music was nice; I enjoyed every minute of it. I was kind of young at the time—in my 20s—and what happened was I worked 41 nights in a row. It was a job here tonight, then you had to go 400 miles to do the next job, the next night maybe 250, the next night maybe 350. Well, we was beat on some of the jobs, I'll tell you. When we got back to Chicago we thought we was gonna rest, which we didn't. This is the reason I quit—we couldn't rest. I just had my little fling and come back and told Wolf, 'Hey, man, make room.'"

Sumlin rejoined Wolf's band, and from 1957 until the '70s he almost continually worked the clubs and taverns around Chicago and out-of-town concerts. In 1957 he played on "Sitting On Top Of The World," and two years later (this time as the band's only guitarist) recorded "Howlin' Blues" [out of print]. In 1960, with Otis Spann on piano, Willie Dixon on bass, and Fred Below on drums, Howlin' Wolf's band recorded three tunes that have since become blues standards, "Wang-Dang Doodle," "Back Door Man," and "Spoonful." Hubert used a Gretsch electric for some of these records, and an early model Gibson Les Paul for others ("Spoonful," he recalls, was done with the Les Paul). By this time he had developed a style of playing that was a combination of lead and rhythm, or as he describes it, "'twixt and between." His relationship with Wolf had also improved to the point where he could second-guess his leader's next musical move: "I became the only one in the group he didn't come right down on and say, 'You didn't do this right,' because I could feel the man. Like we knowed what the other was going to do, what the other one was thinking. I never would get away from him where I couldn't watch him, and we got to communicate so well that I knew what he was gonna do before he did. That's the way we were."

Sumlin and the Wolf band continued recording during the early '60s, producing "The Red Rooster" (this is one of Hubert's rare appearances on slide guitar), "Down In The Bottom" [both on *Howlin' Wolf*], "Shake For Me," "I Ain't Superstitious," and "Goin' Down Slow" [all out of print] in 1961, "Do The Do" [out of print] in 1962, and "Tail Dragger," "Built For Comfort," and "Three Hundred Pounds Of Joy" [all on *Howlin' Wolf*] in 1963. The following year the band toured Europe as part of the American Folk Blues Festival and recorded "Dust My Broom" [out of print] in Hamburg, Germany. In October 1964 Hubert recorded "No Title Boogie" [out of print] under his own name for the Fontana label, and the following month recorded several

*Continued*

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now out-of-print sides for the German-based Amiga label, including "Love You Woman," "When I Feel Better," "I Love," and "Hubert's Blues." He also made "Across The Board," "Sumlin Boogie," and "Hubert's Racket" [all out of print] for the Blue Horizon label.

In the mid-'60s Sumlin appeared on some Amiga sides with Sunnyland Slim. In 1966 he toured briefly with Muddy Waters and made club performances around Chicago with the Magic Sam Band. His main guitar at this time was a Rickenbacker electric. During the late '60s Chess recorded some new Howlin' Wolf material on which Sumlin played, including the LP *More Real Blues* [out of print]. In April 1969 the Cadet label released *The Howlin' Wolf Album*, which was subtitled *This is Howlin' Wolf's new album. He doesn't like it. He didn't like his electric guitar at first either.*

Howlin' Wolf, Sumlin, and other members of the band journeyed back to England in the early '70s and recorded *The London Howlin' Wolf Sessions* for Chess. Appearing on the LP is a host of well-known rock and rollers, among them keyboardists Stevie Windwood and Ian Stewart, Rolling Stones bassist Bill Wyman [*GP*, Dec. '78] and drummer Charlie Watts, and, on lead and slide guitar, Eric Clapton. "I didn't know I was gonna meet all these people from famous groups, such as Charlie Watts," Hubert says. "It was a great thing for me to do. I thought they were the greatest; I still think they are.

"I didn't know Eric Clapton until we came in the studios together. He didn't look like I pictured. I was sittin' down and he got him a chair and sat down by me. We recorded two numbers together before we even reached over and made names together. He said, 'My name is Eric,' and I said, 'My name's Hubert.' And he said, 'I know about you,' and I said, 'Well, man, I heard about you, too.' So we got to talking and he invited me to dinner. I went outside the studio and he had a Rolls Royce out there with a chauffeur. We went way up from London in some woods. Man, it was a big old place—I ain't been over it all yet; I've just walked through some of it. The first thing he did was take me down in the basement and show me his guitars. 'Have one,' he said. I picked out a Fender Stratocaster. He had about 140 guitars, maybe more than that. He was surrounded."

During the last few years of his life, Howlin' Wolf was a sick man. In 1973 he was injured in an auto accident that caused kidney damage. Still, the veteran bluesman continued to appear in concert until just before his death in January 1976. "About four months before Wolf really got sick, I thought I had better start looking out for Hubert," Sumlin says. "The thing about it is when you love a person, you stay with him as long as I stayed with the Wolf. You say, 'He ain't gonna die; he's forever.' But you can't think like that. I don't believe the good Lord would have just taken him away from here like that for no reason. After he died, a gang of people was talking about me: 'Oh, yeah, what's he gonna do now—Wolf is gone.' And I got home one day and my wife told me people was callin', wanting to know if I would still work. I said, 'You tell them I'm gonna be working as long as there's a Hubert. I'm gonna do just like the Wolf.' He worked up until the end, so I'm gonna be working as long as I can."

Sumlin assumed leadership of the Howlin' Wolf Band in 1976, and also began working clubs around the Chicago area with Sunnyland Slim. He recorded a solo album, *Groove*, for the European Black And Blue label. In 1978 he was featured on five songs on the first volume of Alligator Records's *Living Chicago Blues* series, performing with Eddie Shaw And The Wolf Gang, a band with which he frequently appears today. His main stage instruments are currently a Gibson ES-335 and a recent model Les Paul Custom (his

*Continued*

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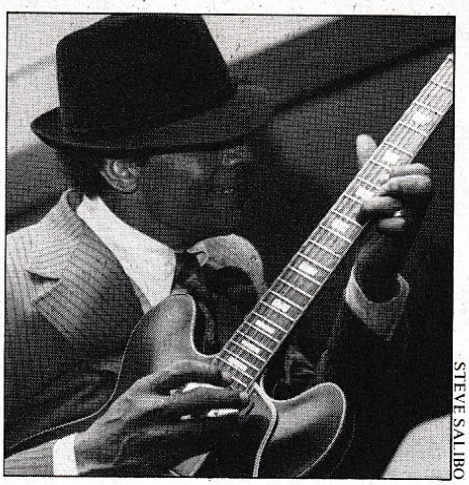
early Les Paul, which he used on late '50s and early '60s Howlin' Wolf sessions, is now enshrined in a glass case in his living room). Hubert usually uses light-gauge strings on his electrics, and favors Fender Pro Reverb amps. He also owns an Epiphone acoustic guitar.

When Hubert first started playing guitar, he used flatpicks. "I couldn't use nothing else," he says. "Then I got so doggone fast with the straight picks I got some fingerpicks. I played with those a good deal; I guess a couple of years. I figured the straight pick was better, and so then I was running all over myself again. I was playing some stuff that I think was before my time, and so I put it down. I sat down in the basement one day and said, 'Well, I gotta find Hubert; I gotta see where I am.' I had to get me a tone. It seemed like it comé to me just like I was dreamin'—I found out that I could get a feeling with my fingers better than I could with a pick. I found out I had more soul in me without the picks. The tone fitted Wolf, and from then on it was a natural thing."

It is interesting to note that when Sumlin looks back over a long career and encounters with most of the best-known bluesmen of the second half of the 20th century, he cites as his favorite guitarist none other than Jimi Hendrix [*GP*, Sept. '75]: "I was fortunate enough to meet this guy, and I thought he was wonderful. He was already famous when I



STEVE SALIBO

met him, and he said, 'I've been hearing about you, Hubert. They tell me you're a fine guitar player.' I said, 'Well, you know, I try to play.' We jammed together in this club in the Village in New York. Richie Havens [Aug. '70] was there, too. Jimi played a whole set with me and Wolf's band. This was pretty close to 1970. I didn't know I liked him that much till I saw him play. This drummer, Buddy Miles, played too. Jimi was a swell guy, one of the best guitar players I've ever seen."

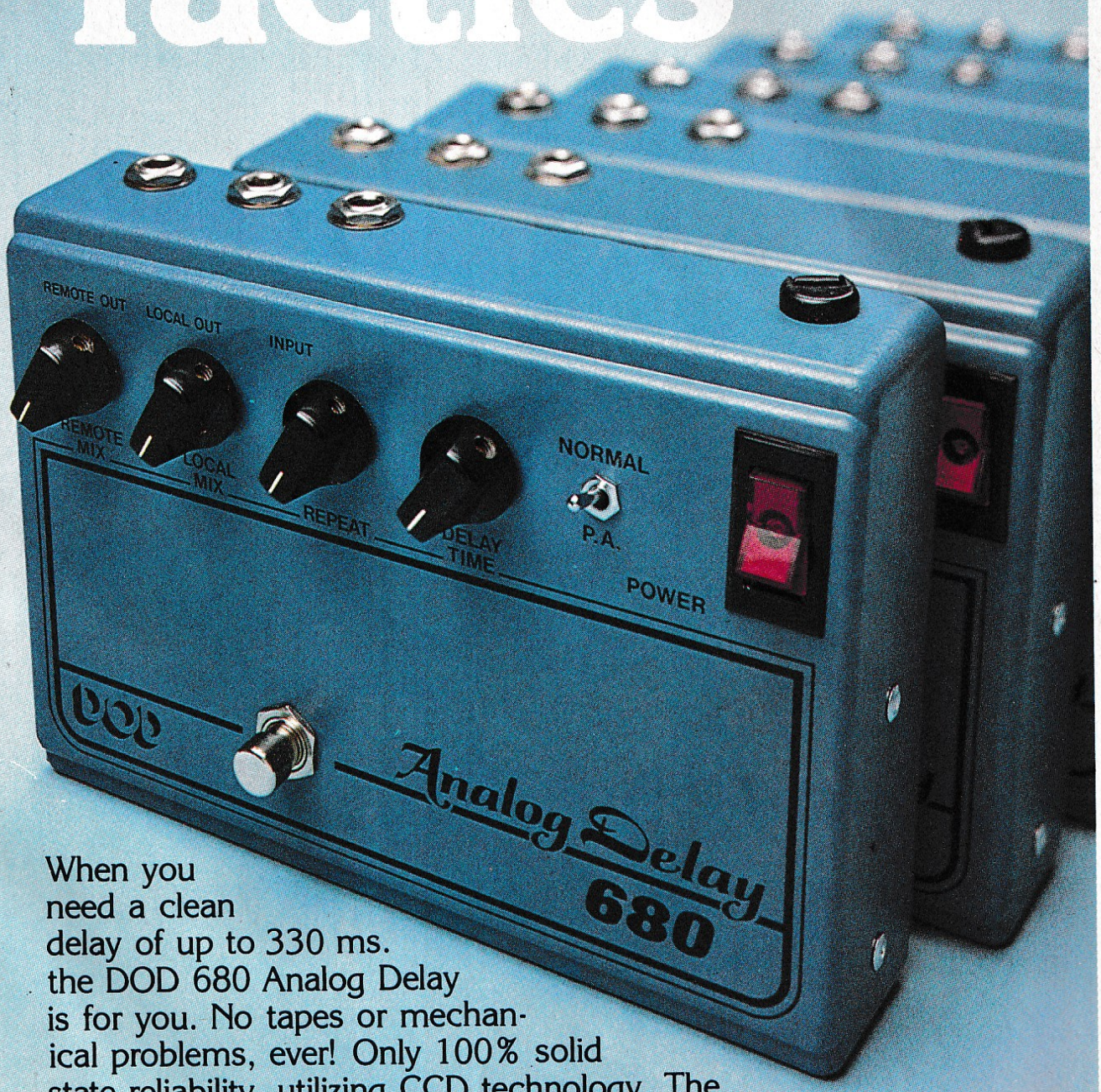
When Hubert is asked what advice he'd give young guitarists, his first instinct is to advise them to find their own voice: "When you go on the bandstand, be yourself. Although you may be doing things just like other people do them, be yourself while doing them. You can't just say, 'I'm gonna play just like this man here; he ain't doin' nothing but making money.' If you got something of your own, you ain't got to be worried about nobody. They ain't gonna mess with you. Find that vibration, that feeling, that soul. If you play any instrument, that is it. If you do well, I figure it's like this: You gonna be thought of."

In the future, Hubert hints, he may get into playing a little jazz. But for the moment, he says, blues is still his life: "I ain't saying I will do jazz, and I ain't going to say I won't. But you'd better believe I'm gonna be sticking with the blues a while, because it's gonna be here. You'd better believe that; I've found this out. You've gotta listen, because when you're playing rock and roll, you're playing the blues." ■

**A Selected Sumlin Discography**

**Solo albums:** *Groove*, Black And Blue [15 Rue Dulong, 75017 Paris, France], 511. **With Howlin' Wolf:** *Howlin' Wolf*, Chess, 2ACMB-201; *The Howlin' Wolf Album*, Cadet [dist. by Chess], 319; *Anthology Of The Blues, Memphis*, Kent [5810 S. Normandie, Los Angeles, CA 90044], 9002; *Underground Blues*, Kent, 535; *Twenty Greatest R&B Hits*, Kent, 527; *The London Howlin' Wolf Sessions*, Chess, 60008. **With others:** Eddie Shaw And The Wolf Gang, *Living Chicago Blues, Vol. I, Alligator, 7701.*

# Delaying Tactics

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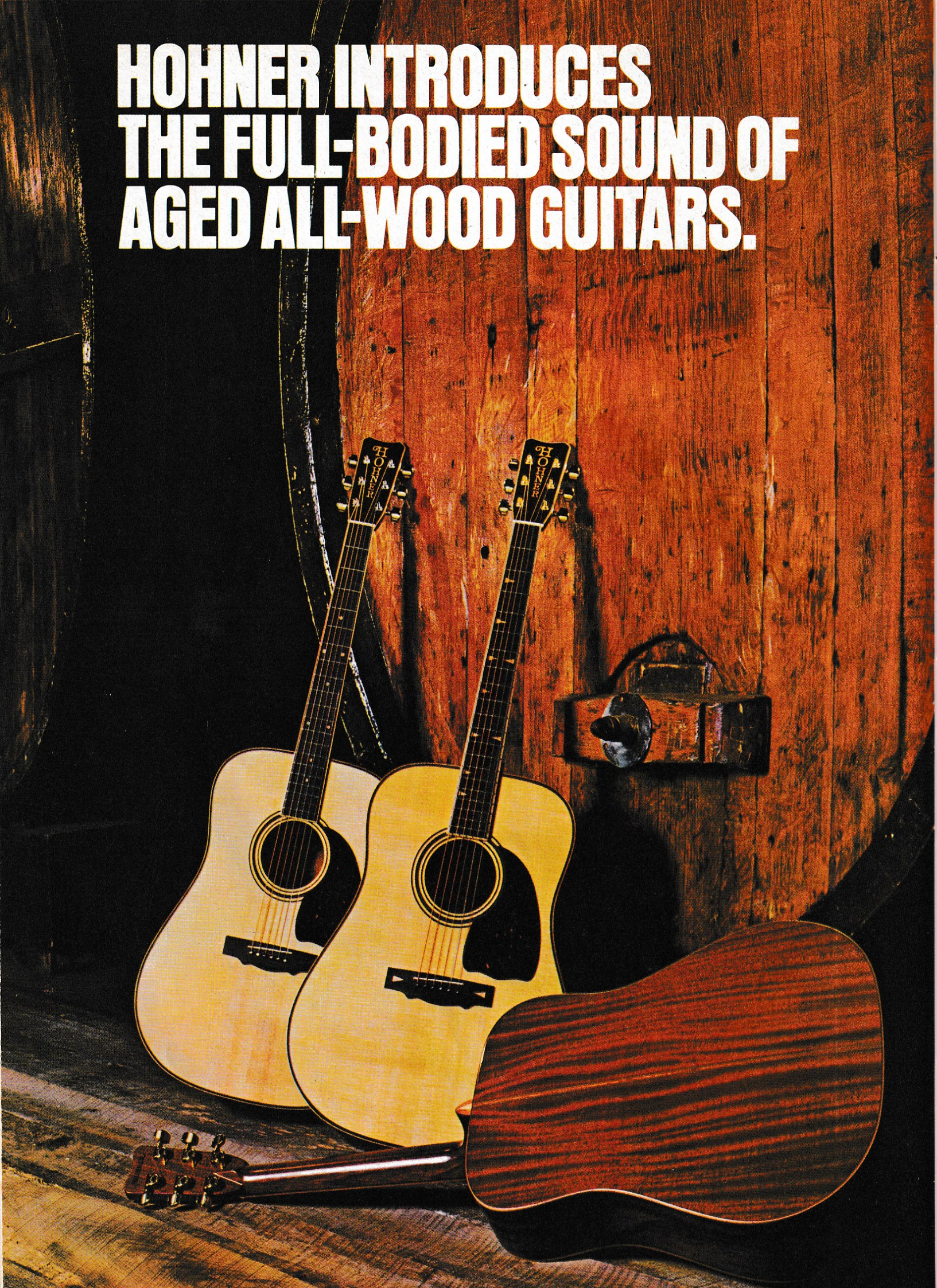

# From aging of the wood to the last handcrafted detail, each guitar in our Arbor Series takes 5 years to make.

Like a fine wine, producing a truly fine guitar requires nature's choicest materials, the mellowing of time, and years of experience in the art.

Hohner has handcrafted such guitars in the all-wood Arbor Series dreadnoughts. Their tones are full-bodied like vintage wines, yet these instruments cost hundreds of dollars less than others of comparable quality.

**Woods from around the world.** The woods in each instrument are the finest obtainable. Tops are solid close-grained spruce from Canada and Alaska. Necks are solid Honduras mahogany, best in the world. The rosewood for fingerboards comes from Brazil, the choicest grown. Bodies are selected mahogany, rosewood and makassa. And all woods are subjected to long aging. Between successive air-dryings, dry-heat kiln treatments, and electronic humidity-controlled drying for optimum aging, the process takes 5 full years! As a result, the woods are amazingly free of instabilities that can affect long-term performance or natural mellowing.

**Even bindings are wood.** Instead of the celluloid used on most guitars, bindings are natural maple. This greatly improves tone and acoustic qualities. Of course, using wood is more difficult and takes more time, but it's worth it. Because natural wood bindings expand and shrink with the body of the guitar, tolerances are extremely close. So close, in fact, we have to use computerized precision machinery to cut the exact width and depth.

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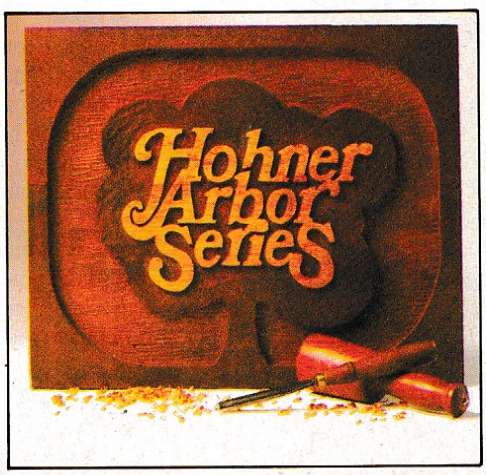


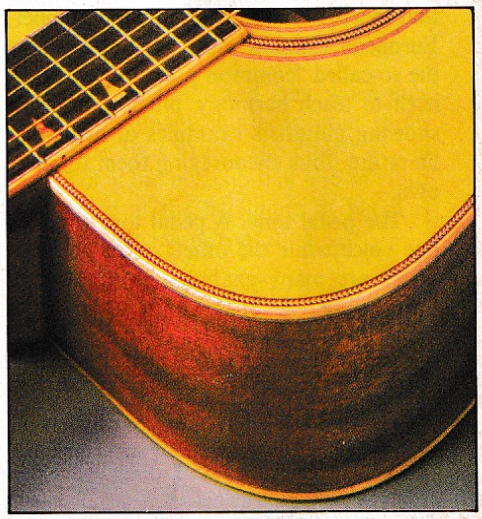

are hand-scalloped so the tops resonate better. Rosewood instead of spruce is used at the base of the "X" under the bridge to transmit more "vibes."

**No detail overlooked.** Wherever you look on the Arbor Series, you'll see the same thoughtful eye for detail. Necks are dovetailed into the body, not doweled as on other guitars. Routing for inlays is deeper to avoid the cracking customary with other instruments. All trim is handset wood inlay—there are no decals. And fingerboards are solid hand-sanded rosewood with polished nickel silver frets.

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# HARMONIC ANALYSIS, Part II

## More Examples From The Classical Guitar Repertoire

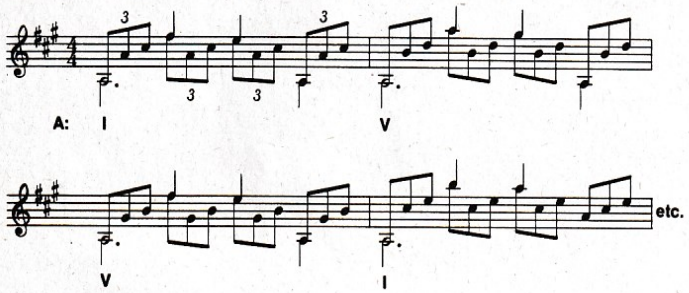
**By Matthew Clark**

*MATTHEW CLARK IS A CLASSICAL guitarist and currently is an instructor of guitar at the Eli Kassner Guitar Academy in Toronto, Canada.*

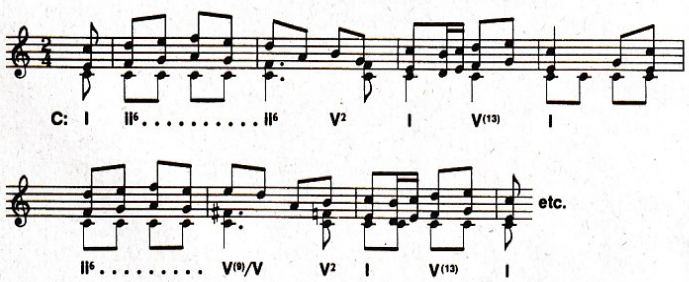
* * * *

IN AN EARLIER ARTICLE [*GP,* Dec. '79] I discussed triads within a key and the various embellishing (or non-harmonic) tones. Now I want to add to that by looking at pedal tones, secondary 7ths and secondary dominants, dominant 9th and 13th chords, borrowed chords, and modulation. First, however, I would like to remind you that this material finds its greatest number of applications in Western European classical music written between roughly 1700 and 1900, the so-called "common-practice" period. It is not intended in and of itself to teach harmony, but to complement regular instruction by showing guitarists examples of harmonic practice from their own literature, thus encouraging them to make further analyses on their own.

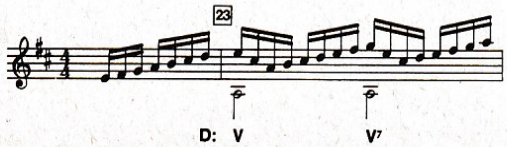
**The pedal tone.** A pedal tone (or pedal point) is a tone held in one voice while the other voices go through changes of harmony. There are many examples in guitar literature. Here is one from Carcassi's *Étude In A,* Op. 60, No. 3:

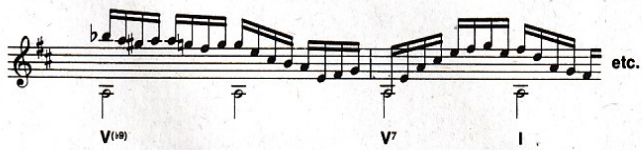



Another example is an Étude by Fernando Sor (No. 20 in Andres Segovia's *Twenty Studies For The Guitar By Fernando Sor* [Edward B. Marks Corp., 136 W. 52nd St., New York, NY 10019]):

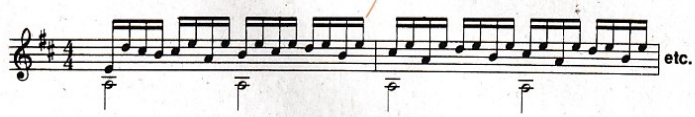



The Prelude to the first *Cello Suite* by J.S. Bach has a very long pedal. (I used John Duarte's transcription, Guitar Archives 213, published by Schott & Co. [48 Great Marlborough Rd., London W1, England].) From bar 23 to bar 41, the penultimate bar of the piece, there is a constant *A* in the bass. The passage is too long to quote in full, but here is an excerpt:

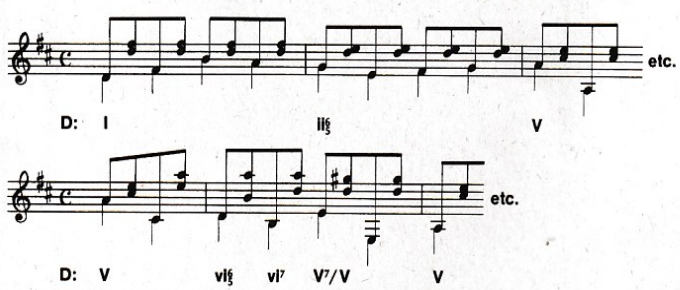


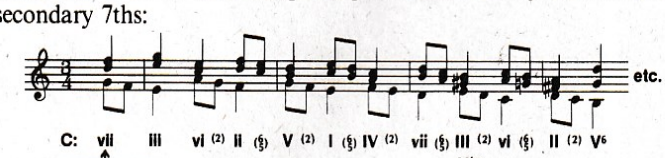

From bar 31 to bar 36, the pedal *A* in the bass is joined by a pedal in the treble (an inverted pedal):




**Secondary 7ths.** A 7th chord may be constructed on any degree of the scale. The dominant 7th is by far the most common, so it may be considered the primary 7th chord. The others are called secondary 7th chords; among these, some are more common than others. Except in sequences, IV7 and vii$^{ø}$ are rare, since they lead to vii° and iii, respectively. [*Ed. Note: Lower-case Roman numerals indicate minor chords.*] In minor keys, only ii7 and VI7 are common. All 7ths derive historically from non-harmonic tones, and most often these secondary 7ths follow the rules of non-harmonic preparation and resolution. Sor's *Study No. 4 In D* includes some secondary 7ths:

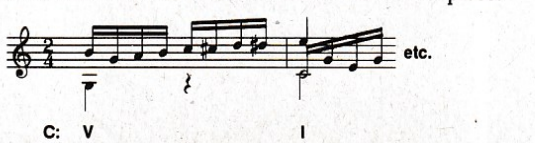



The secondary 7th notes here are properly prepared and resolved, but they are clearly chord members, not embellishing tones. In Sor's *Study No. 1 In C,* there are passing tones which may be considered secondary 7ths:

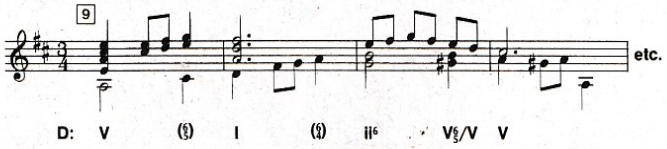



The passing tones in the treble include the 9ths of the various chords, but secondary 9ths do not occur as independent harmonies. (The first two chords of the example could be considered V$^2$ to I$^6$, but the analysis given here maintains the sequence established in the first four bars, and also initiates the cycle of fifths root movements of the next four bars. Notice the progressions IV to vii, vii to iii, and also vii to III.)

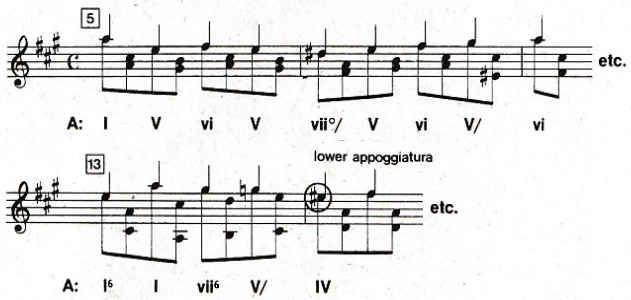
**Secondary dominants.** Only a tiny number of compositions are restricted to the notes within a certain key. Some notes outside the key may be explained simply as chromatic embellishing tones, which may have no impact whatever on the harmonic structure of a piece:



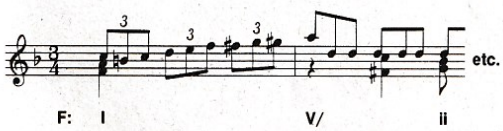
Other notes outside the key may be explained by the rule that any triad within a key may be preceded by its own dominant or dominant 7th chord. These are called secondary dominants; in all cases (with the exception of ♭VII, or the V of iii in minor), the use of secondary dominants will introduce a note or two from outside the key. The most common secondary dominant is the dominant of the dominant (usually symbolized V/V), which is a major triad or 7th built on the 2nd degree of the scale. In this *Minuet* by French lutenist and composer Robert de Visée [1650-1725], the only chord out of the key is V/V:




Sor's *Study No. 3 In A* includes a number of secondary dominants —V/vi, V/IV, and vii°/V—which act as the dominant of the dominant, as I will explain in the next section.

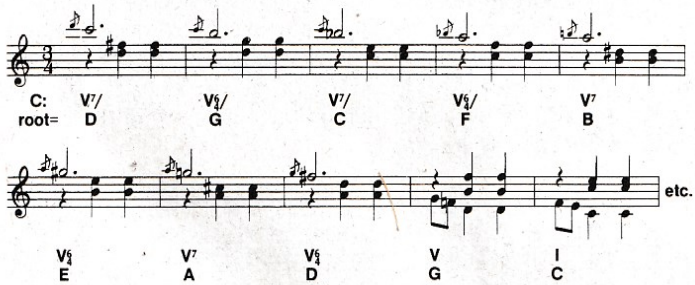



Sor's *Study No. 7 In F* includes V/ii:




Later in the same study there are V/IV, V/V, and a deceptive V/vi leading to IV.

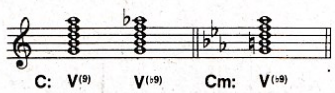
The rule which allows any chord to be preceded by its dominant can be extended: The dominant may be preceded by its dominant, which may in turn be preceded by its dominant, which.... This extension produces a chain of major chords whose roots are a series of fifths, as in this passage from Sor's *Minuet* (from Op. 25):



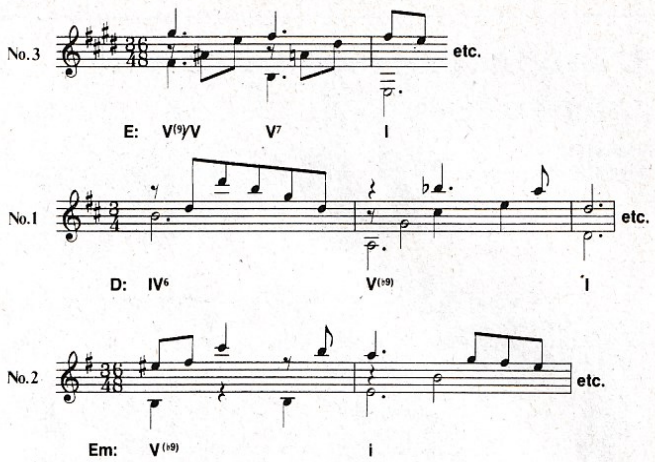

Here the series is to some extent broken between bars 4 and 5, since *F* is not a perfect fifth above *B;* but IV is often used as if it were the dominant of VII.

**Dominant 9th, 11th, and 13th chords.** Construction of chords in thirds may be carried beyond triads and 7ths to produce 9ths, 11ths, and 13ths. In the common-practice period these extensions occur only on dominant function chords. Only the 9th is common; the 13th is sometimes used; but the true 11th chord [root, 3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th, 11th] virtually never occurs.

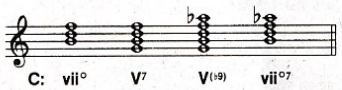
There are two forms of the dominant 9th: one built on the major scale, one built on the minor:



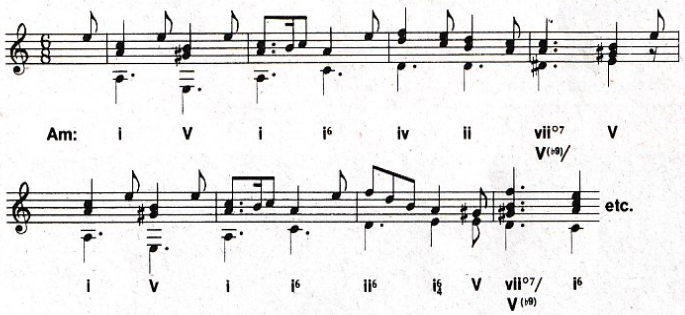

Both the V9 and the V♭9 may be used in major keys, but in minor keys only the V♭9 is used. There are a number of 9th chords in the *Quatro Valses Venezolanos*, by Antonio Lauro:



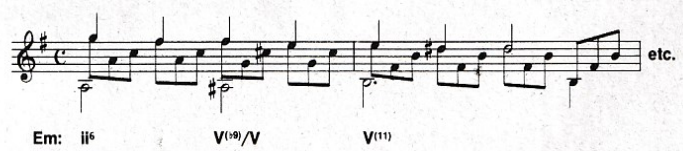

The diminished triad built on the leading tone (vii°) sounds very much like a dominant 7th chord; likewise, the leading tone diminished 7th chord (vii7) is much like a minor 9th:




Some theorists consider diminished triads and 7ths, when they have a dominant function, to be dominant chords without roots. Thus, in the following *Andantino* by Carulli, the chord at the beginning of bar 8 is either vii° 7 of i (2nd inversion) or V♭9 of i (3rd inversion, root missing). The chord at the beginning of bar 4 is either vii° 7 of V, or V♭9 of V (1st inversion, root missing):




During the common-practice period, the 11th note above the dominant is not heard as a true factor of the chord, but rather as a non-harmonic tone—a temporary replacement of the 3rd—as in Sor's *Study No. 17 In E Minor:*



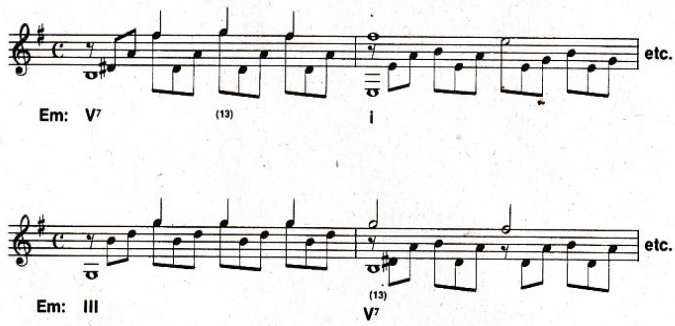

Villa-Lobos, who is outside the common-practice period, uses true 11th chords. In the following example from his *Study No. 7,* both the 3rd and the 11th are present:


The 13th chord is the upper limit of chords built in thirds; the next third produces the 15th, which is merely the double octave of the root. In the common-practice period many 13th chords can be analyzed as the result of non-harmonic tones. Just as the 11th is a temporary replacement for the 3rd, so the 13th is a temporary replacement for the 5th. This can be seen in the *Study No. 17 In E*

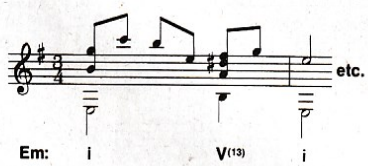
*Continued*

## HARMONIC ANALYSIS

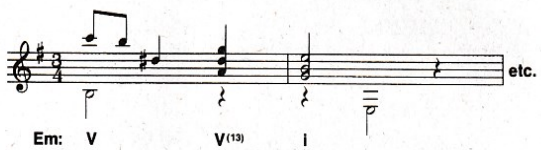
*Minor* by Sor. The first example is a 13th by upper auxiliary; the second is a 13th by appogiatura or suspension:




*Lagrima* by Tarrega has an échappée 13th:

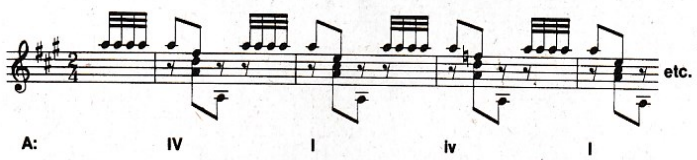



And his *Adelita* has a true 13th, with no resolution to the 5th of the chord:

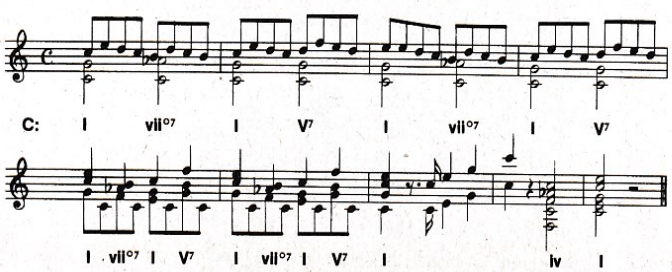



**Borrowed chords.** A common resource for the enrichment of harmony is the use, in one mode, of chords found in another mode —for example, the use of an *Fm* in the key of *C* major. These are often called borrowed chords. The extension of this practice results in what is called interchangeability of the modes, where the major and minor modes built on a particular note are seen as two aspects of the same fundamental tonality. Although borrowing occurs in both directions, using chords from the minor in the major is the more common practice.

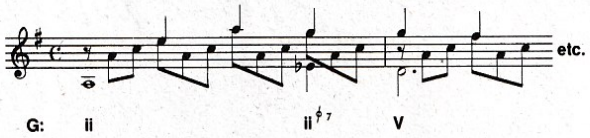
A borrowed minor chord built on the 4th degree of the scale is found in Sor's *Study No. 10:*



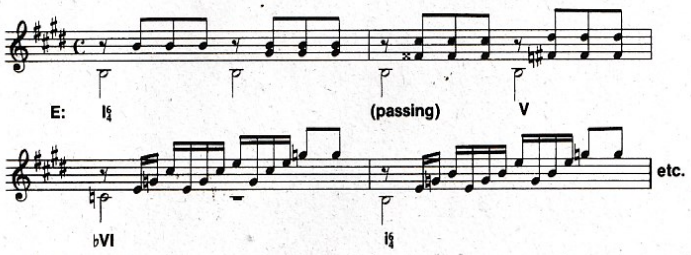

The minor chord on the 4th degree of the scale may be used in the plagal cadence (which gives a sense of complete finality). In his *Study In C,* Op. 60, No. 6, Carcassi has prepared for the *A♭* note in the penultimate chord by many repetitions of vii°7 over a tonic pedal:



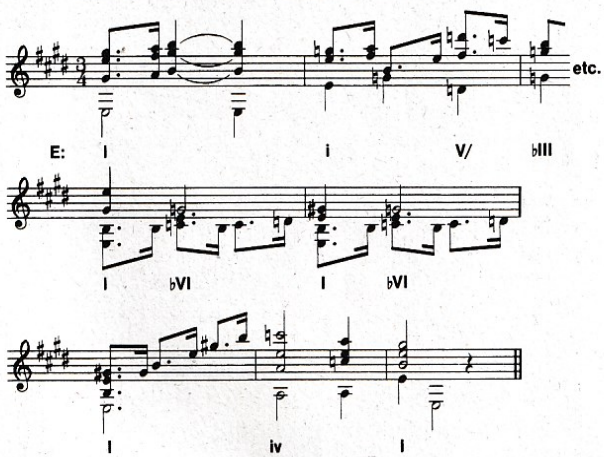
A diminished chord built on the 2nd degree of the scale is found in Sor's *Study No. 17:*



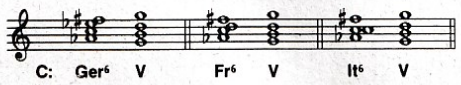

The major chord built on the lowered 6th degree of the major scale provides a variant of the deceptive cadence, as in this *Study In E,* Op. 100, No. 24, by Giuliani:



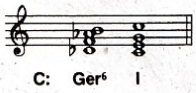

Here the tonic minor chord following the ♭VI suggests the merger of the modes. More extensive interchange of modes may be seen in Tarrega's *Prelude In E Major,* which has long sections in the minor:



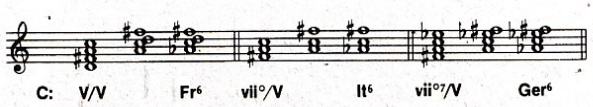

**Augmented 6th chords.** The augmented 6th chords are so called because of the interval between the highest and lowest voices (in their usual arrangement):




These chords are often given the names German 6th, French 6th, and Italian 6th. Usually the augmented 6th chords precede a dominant or a tonic six-four (I$_4^6$) followed by a dominant, and usually the lowered submediant of the key is in the bass. Occasionally an augmented 6th with the lowered supertonic in the bass directly precedes the tonic:

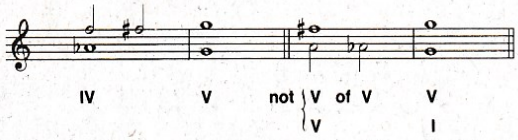



There is some disagreement among music theoreticians about the origin of the augmented 6th chords. Charles Kitson in *Elementary Harmony* [Oxford Univ. Press. 16-00 Pollitt Dr., Fair Lawn, NJ 07410] says that they are alterations of the dominant of the dominant:

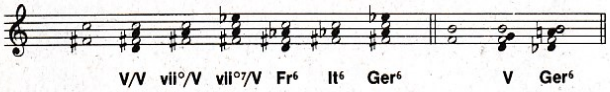



*Continued*

Walter Piston, however, rejects this explanation. In his book *Harmony* [W.W. Norton & Co., 55 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10003] he says, "The augmented 6th interval does not come from a dominant [of a dominant] with lowered 5th, but from a subdominant with raised root." Piston gives the following example to show the contrapuntal origin of the augmented 6th:

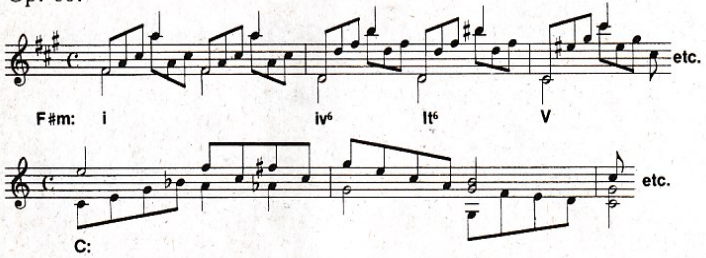



Many jazz musicians see the essence of these chords to be the tritone, which establishes a dominant function no matter what other notes are included in the chord:

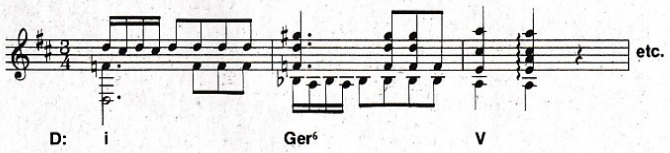



This analysis supports Kitson's view that these chords are derived from the V/V; further, the augmented 6th with the lowered supertonic in the bass is then seen as derived from the dominant.

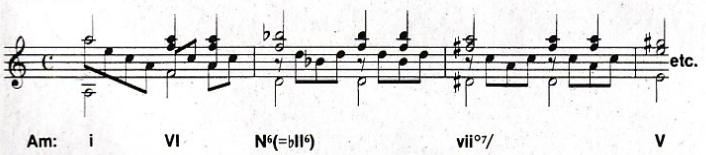
It is easy to find examples of augmented 6th chords in the standard guitar literature. Here is one from Carcassi's *Study No. 3,* Op. 60:



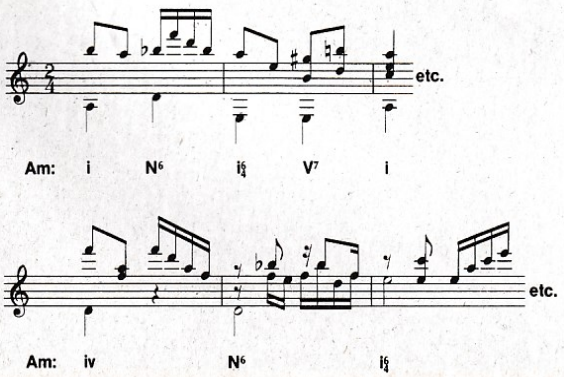

Because of the thin texture of much guitar music, many of the augmented 6ths will necessarily be Italian; but four-voice augmented 6ths certainly do occur, even in pieces written predominantly in three voices—such as Sor's *Minuet In D,* Op. 11, No. 5:

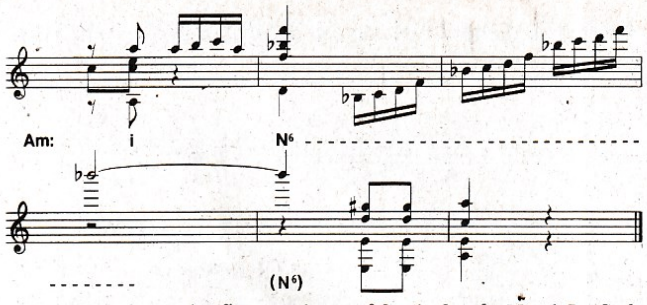



**Neopolitan 6ths.** The major triad built on the lowered supertonic is called the Neopolitan; since it is usually found in first inversion, it is usually called the Neopolitan *6th,* even when it occurs in other inversions. Neopolitans often precede the dominant, the dominant of the dominant, or the $I\frac{6}{4}$. Here is an example from Sor's *Study No. 14:*

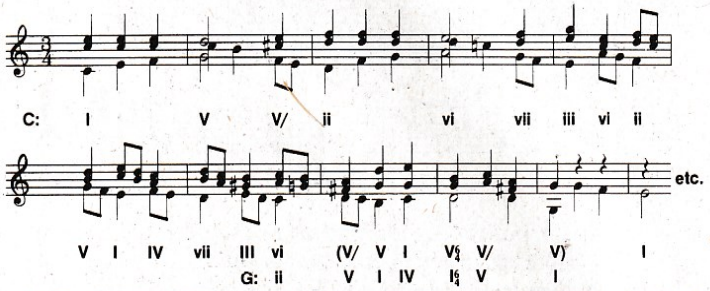



*Maria,* by Tarrega, has several Neopolitan 6ths:



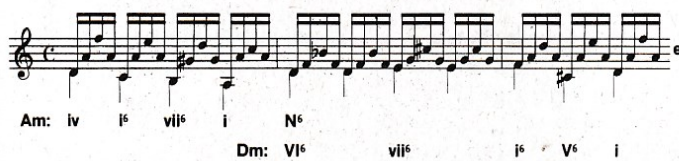

**Modulation.** In the first ten bars of Sor's *Study No. 1 In C,* there are a number of secondary dominants introducing notes outside the key:



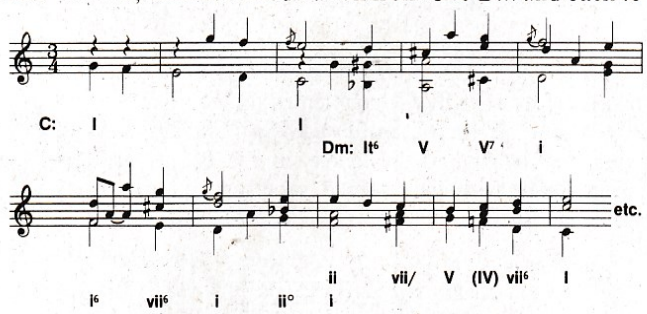

In bar 2 there is a *C*♯, but this is cancelled by a *C*♮ in bar 4. In bar 7 there is a *G*♯, but this is cancelled by a *G*♮ in the same bar. In neither case is the note outside the key allowed to linger in the ear. In bar 8 there is an *F*♯ which is not quickly cancelled; rather, there is another *F*♯ in bar 9, leading to a cadence on *G.* The listener, therefore, may feel that there has been a shift of key center—that is, a modulation—from *C* to *G.* This change, however, is not long: The *F*♮ in bar 10 reasserts the key of *C.*

A common tool in modulation is the pivot chord, one which may be analyzed in terms of both the old key and the new key. In this example, the *Am* in bar 7 is both the submediant (vi) in *C* and the supertonic (ii) in *G,* as I have indicated. Because it belongs to both keys, there is no shock to the ear and the transition is smooth.

It is possible to use an altered chord as the pivot. In Carcassi's *Study In A Minor,* Op. 60, No. 7, there is a brief modulation from *Am* to *Dm* using a Neopolitan 6th of *Am*:




It is not necessary to use a pivot chord at all. In Sor's *Study No. 1,* bars 11 to 19, there is a modulation from *C* to *Dm* and back to *C:*




Although the *C* chord in bar 12 could, perhaps, be analyzed as the low 7th of *Dm,* the ear hears it unquestionably as the tonic of *C,* so that the augmented 6th at the end of the bar is surprising. In modulation without a pivot chord, it is usual for one voice to proceed by chromatic half-steps (here, *G*♮ to *G*♯).

Modulation is a rich and complex subject, and an important aspect of composition in the common-practice period—both in formal construction of pieces and also in emotional expression. The discussion here presents only the elementary techniques of modulation, but I hope enough to serve as a basis for further analysis. As I have said, this material is designed only to supplement regular theory instruction—to encourage the guitarist to apply the theory he has learned to the music he actually plays.

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# EDDIE VAN HALEN

## Young Wizard of Power Rock

**By Jas Obrecht**

VERY FEW GUITARISTS have had as intense an impact in as short a time as Eddie Van Halen. The sparkplug of the band that bears his family name, he exploded into ears around the world in February 1978 with the release of *Van Halen* [Warner Bros., BSK 3075]. On this debut album Eddie wrestled devastating feedback, kamikaze vibrato moans, sustained harmonics, white-hot leads, and liquid screams out of a cranked-to-the-max homemade guitar that combined a Fender Strat-style body with the electronics of a Gibson Les Paul. Even on this first effort, underneath the raw intensity of Eddie's solos—many of which were spontaneous first takes—lies a strong melodic and rhythmic sensitivity.

The immediate success of *Van Halen* catapulted the band on a 10-month world tour, during which Eddie stunned audiences with his seemingly off-hand ability to instantaneously convey to his fingers what he heard in his head. He toted a suitcase full of guitar parts with him, building and fixing instruments in his spare time. In November 1978 Eddie was first presented in the pages of *GP*, discussing his early life and classical piano studies in Holland, his family's immigration to the U.S. in 1967, the founding of Van Halen with his brother Alex, bassist Michael Anthony, and singer Dave Lee Roth, the band's discovery and first album, and his equipment. By the end of 1978, companies had cloned his trademark guitar, players had begun borrowing his licks, and Eddie had walked away with *GP*'s Best New Talent poll award.

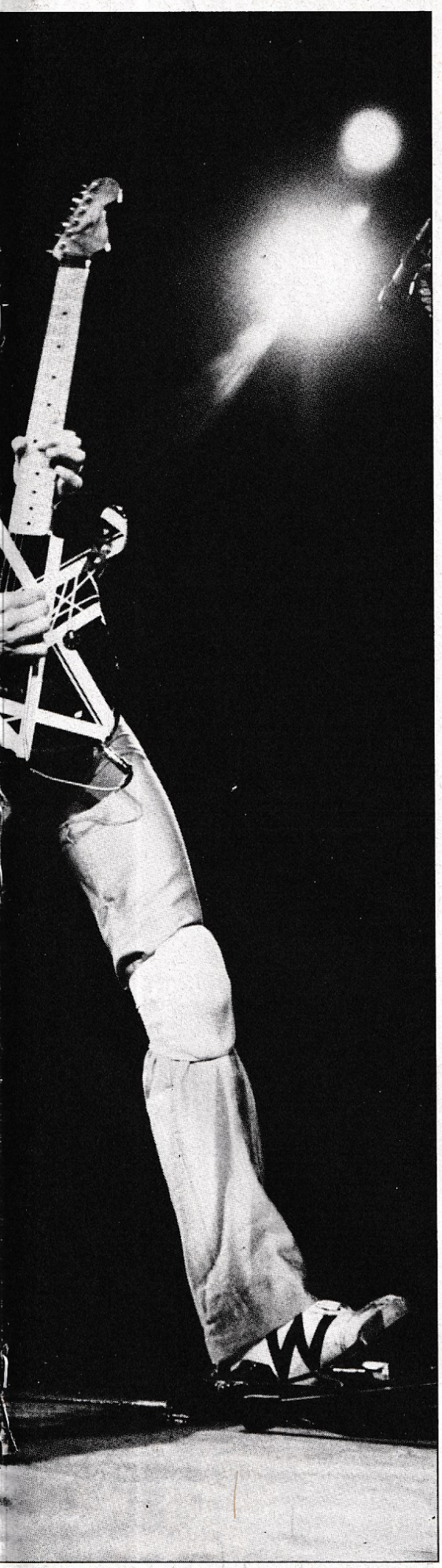
For *Van Halen II,* [Warner Bros., HS 3312] released early in 1979, Eddie slapped together another Strat-style guitar and took up where the first LP left off. Besides pulling off several imaginative, fat-toned solos with the dizzying skill of a stunt pilot on a grand finale spin, he furthered his exploration of new and unusual guitar sounds. In the opening of "Women in Love," for instance, he achieves a chime-like effect by fingering notes with his left hand while simultaneously tapping each note's harmonic counterpart on the fingerboard above—a technique he also uses in "Spanish Fly," a fast flamenco-style nylon-string piece.

Van Halen set off on another world tour in March 1979, spending eight months playing the U.S., France, Belgium, Holland, England, Japan, and Canada. *Van Halen II* went gold in two weeks after 500,000 copies were sold; seven weeks later the record was declared platinum when sales climbed over 1,000,000 units. (Since the release of *Van Halen*, the group's name has never been off the charts.) In December 1979—just one year after he won Best New Talent—Eddie edged out veteran guitarists Jimmy Page [*GP*, July '77], Carlos Santana [June '78], and Steve Howe [May '78] to win Best Rock Guitarist in *GP*'s Tenth Annual Readership Poll. He also topped readership polls in Japan.

Accolades were not limited to record buyers and poll balloteers in U.S. and abroad, though; players, too, began acclaiming his guitar wizardry. In the August '79 *GP*, Ted Nugent proclaimed him "a fantastic guitarist." Three months later Cheap Trick's Rick Nielsen discussed Van Halen's deft use of the vibrato bar. Then, in the first cover story of the '80s, Pat Travers declared Van Halen the state-of-the-art rock guitarist, adding, "I don't think there's anybody better for saying more, getting a better sound, or just taking advantage of the straight Stratocaster-style sound."

Van Halen came off the road in December 1979 and almost immediately went into the studio to record their third LP, *Women*

NEIL ZLOZOWER



*And Children First* [Warner Bros., HS 3415], in only eight days. Once again, Eddie proved that his playing is not limited to rock styles. On "Could This Be Magic" he performed an impromptu Hawaiian-sounding acoustic slide part, and also played the steel-string on "Take Your Whiskey Home." And with the enthusiasm of a mad scientist ready to pull the switch, he continued his quest for weird sounds, using his guitar to duplicate a prop plane revving up, shaking his bass *E* string against the pickup to heighten the intensity of a passage, and banging away on an electric piano hooked up to his pedalboard and Marshall stacks. The electric solos continue in the fiery tradition of the first two albums.

The interview below was conducted while *Women And Children First* was in its final mixing stage. During the seven-hour conversation, Eddie unhesitatingly discussed his guitars, techniques, and views on the art, revealing some information for the first time. He celebrated his birthday a week later on January 26. And now, at age 23, he's the youngest cover story artist in *GP*'s history.

* * * *

*When you started playing guitar, how much time did you spend with it?*

All day, every day. I used to cut school to come home and play. I was so into it.

*Were you self-taught?*

Definitely for guitar. I never had a lesson in my life, except when a friend of mine a long time ago showed me how to do barre chords. I just learned from there.

*How did you teach yourself leads?*

[*Duplicates Eric Clapton's solo in "Crossroads" from Cream's* Wheels Of Fire *LP (RSO, 3802)*]. I know that song note-for-note, and also "I'm So Glad" [*Fresh Cream*, RSO, 3009] and the live version of "Sitting On Top Of The World" [Cream, *Goodbye*, RSO, 3013]. I used to know all that stuff.

*Did your brother Alex jam along on drums while you were learning?*

Actually, I started playing drums first. I bought the Surfaris' "Wipe Out." I loved that song, and said, "I'm going to go out and buy myself a $125 St. George drum set." So I got a paper route to pay for it. I'm out throwing the paper—five in the morning, in the rain, with a bicycle with a flat tire—and my brother is practicing on my drums. He got better, so I said, "You take my drums."

*Is this when you got your first guitar?*

Yeah. It was a $70 Teisco Del Ray electric with four pickups. I used to think, man, the more pickups, the better. And look at what I've got now! One pickup and one knob.

*How did you develop your speed?*

Well, I'll tell you. They used to lock me in a little room and go, "Play fast!" [*laughs*]. I was actually trained to be a classical pianist. I had this Russian teacher who couldn't speak a word of English, and he would just sit there with a ruler ready to slap my face if I made a mistake. This started in Holland, and both my brother and I took lessons. Then when we got to the U.S. my dad found another good teacher. Basically, that's where I got my ears developed, learned my theory, and got my fingers moving. Then when the Dave Clark Five and those bands came out, I wanted to go [*plays the riff from "You Really Got Me"*]. I didn't want to go clink, clink, clink. I still play piano, and I also play violin.

*Did your piano study influence your guitar playing?*

Things like this are classical [*plays the continuous left-hand tremolo technique from "Spanish Fly"*]. I know that had something to do with piano. I'm sure some things psychologically come out, but I don't actually sit down at a piano and try to apply it to guitar.

*Were your parents supportive of your move to the guitar and rock and roll?*

My father yes, but my mother no. My mom wanted us in the U.S. and out of Holland—she was afraid we'd get into music like my father. She still doesn't think it will last, but she's proud. My dad was one of the baddest clarinet players of his time. He was so hot—unbelievably. And he had *tone*. My dad is the person who would cut school and smoke cigarettes, and my mom would be the cheerleader. Complete opposites—the conservative and the screw-up. If you sat there and talked to my dad, he'd make you roll over and laugh. He's just like me and Al—16 years old. His whole life has been music; that's all he knows.

*Do they ever go to your concerts?*

Yeah. My dad cries when he sees us play because he loves it. You know, he's so happy. It really is like his dream come true: The family music tradition is continuing, and it's also his name. Like when I was in school, everybody said, "Forget my parents—they're assholes." Not me—I was always the weirdo. I'd say, "Hey, I love my parents. I'll do anything for them. They've always busted their ass for me." On my dad's birthday last year we retired him and bought him a boat. I want to make my people happy.

*What made you decide to build your own guitars?*

A Les Paul to me was just the cliched guitar, the rock and roll guitar. I liked the sound, but it didn't fit my body. I'd have to wear it too high to be able to stretch as I do, and it looks funky. So I wanted to get that type of sound, but with a tremolo. And Bigsbys have got to be the worst. So I bought a '58 Strat years ago when we played high school dances, and Dave and Al just turned and started throwing sticks at me! They said, "Don't use that guitar—it sounds too thin!" You know, single-coil pickups. They had a real buzzy, thin sound unless I used a fuzz box, and that's even worse. So I sold that and

*Continued*

then two years later I bought a router and dumped a Gibson PAF pickup into a '61 Strat. It got very close. All of a sudden the band said, "That's okay. It doesn't sound like a Strat anymore." Then I heard that a company called Charvel [Box 245, San Dimas, CA 91773] made exact duplicates of Fender guitars, but out of nicer wood.

*Is this where you got the wood for your first homemade guitar?*

Yeah. The very first one was the black-and-white striped one on the first album. I went to Charvel and had them rout a body out for just one pickup and one volume knob. I had to cut my own pickguard to cover everything up because it was originally a three-pickup Strat body. I used the vibrato tailpiece from a '58 Strat for that guitar. I also had Charvel make me a really wide neck. I hate skinny necks. I like them to be almost as wide as a classical guitar across the fingerboard, but thin in depth. I left it bare wood because I hate to slip and slide when I start stretching strings. Now at the same time, I built what I call my shark guitar, which is actually one of the first Ibanez Destroyers [shaped like Gibson Explorer] made out of Korina wood. I made the mistake of taking a chainsaw to it and putting a bunch of weird stuff on it.

*Did it lose some tone?*

It lost the tonality I want. Now, kids can't tell—they can buy a DiMarzio pickup and stick it in anything and go, "Yeah, it's rock and roll!" But it was that distinct little tone that I look for that was cut out of the guitar. Then I went to Charvel and bought the parts for a Destroyer with a vibrato. I got tired of playing it, and so I had a friend of mine carve a dragon biting a snake out of the Destroyer's body.

*How long did it take you to build the black-and-white Strat?*

Not really too long, but it took me a while to build up to doing that. I used to have an old Gibson ES-335 that was my main experimental guitar. That was the one I refretted and painted and totally screwed up! I mean, I did everything you can imagine to that guitar to ruin it. But I learned from it. It's too bad, because that guitar would have been worth some bucks today. But I learned what I know of building guitars, so I guess it's worth it.

*Continued*

*Eddie's guitars (standing, L-R): homemade Strat-style (note Floyd rose vibrato clamp), his "Shark" (a chainsaw-modified Ibanez Destroyer), Mighty Mite Megazone, vintage sunburst Gibson Les Paul, recarved Ibanez Destroyer, first homemade Strat-style w/ Charvel body, Charvel guitar; (Foreground, L-R) Dean V, Boogie-bodied homemade Strat-style w/ Floyd Rose clamp, Ovation nylon-string, Gibson ES-335.*

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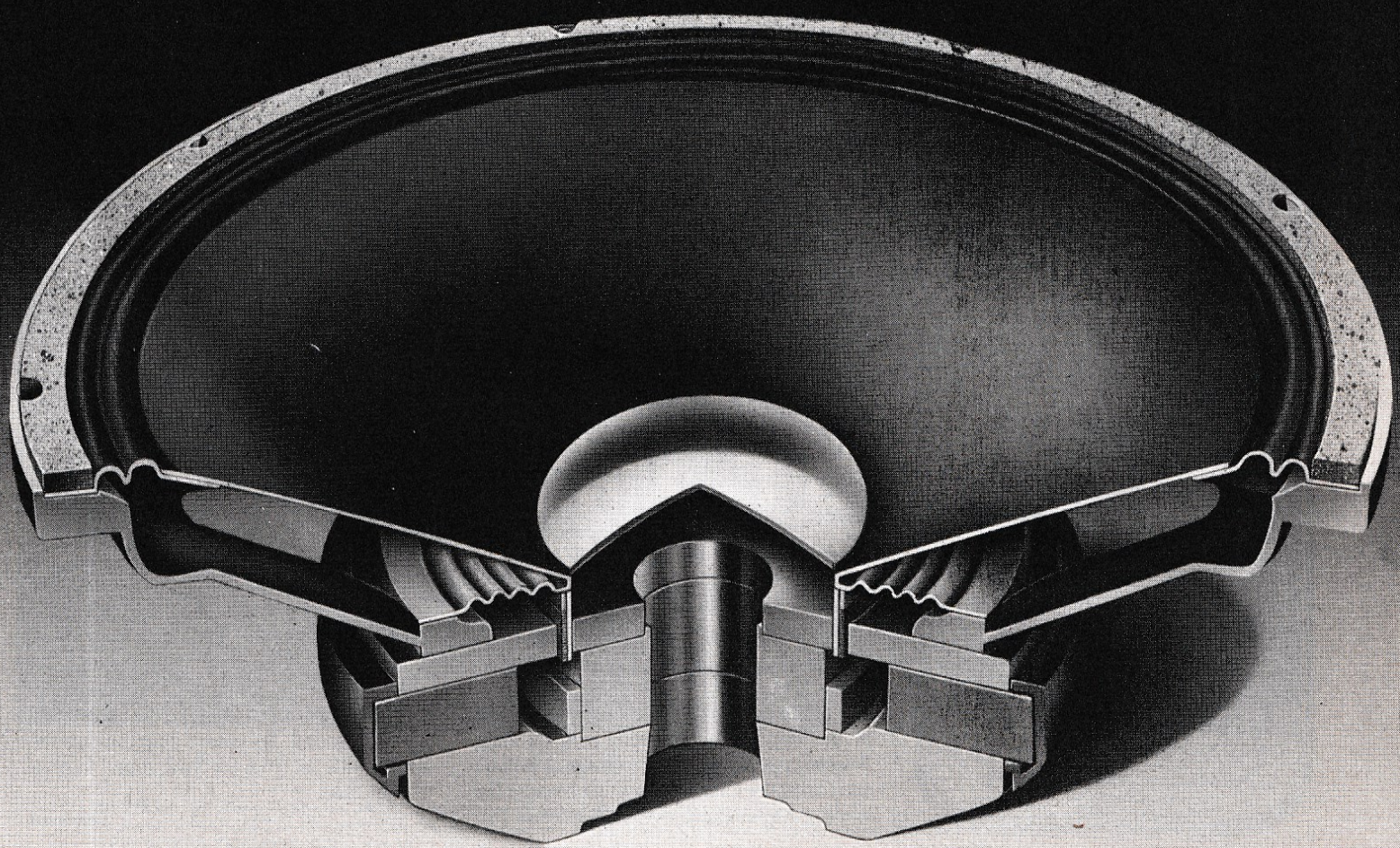


## EDDIE VAN HALEN

*Have you since modified the black-and-white Strat?*

Yeah. A company started copying it, and I said, "Man, I better change it." So I really went to town painting it all freaked out, and I put three pickups back in, but they don't all work—only the rear one works. I just did it to be different, so every kid who bought one like that model would go, "Oh, man, he's got something different again." I always like to turn the corner on people when they start latching on to what I'm doing. Here I am just a punk kid trying to get a sound out of a guitar that I couldn't buy off the rack, so I built one myself and now everybody else wants one.

*Did you make another guitar for your second album?*

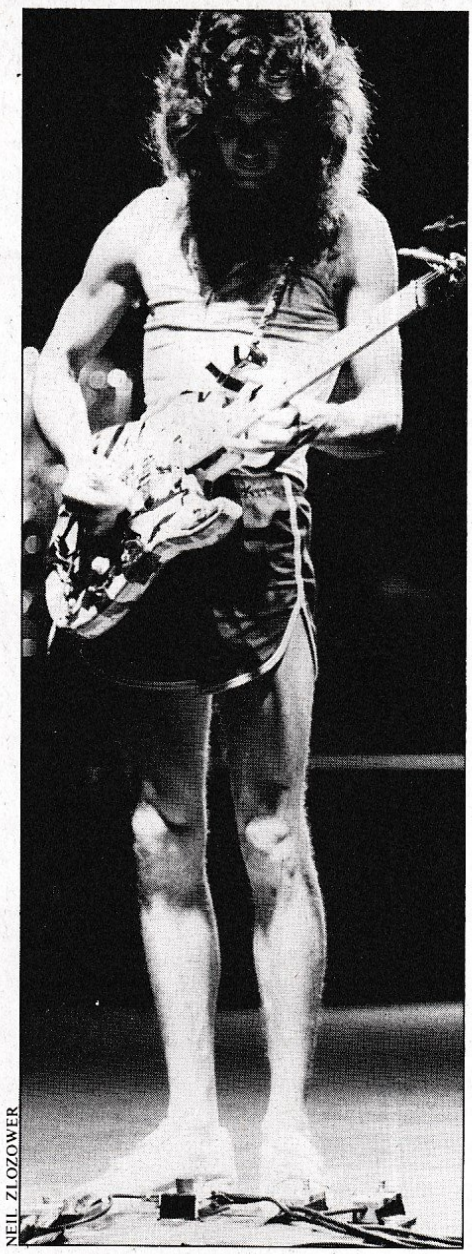
I made the yellow-and-black Strat. It has an ash body by Charvel. It was my idea to have it rear-loaded so I wouldn't have to have a pickguard, and Charvel routed it for me. The pickup that's on the photo is not really what I use—I had just finished slapping it together and painting it when they shot the album cover, and just stuck some garbage pickup in it to look like a complete guitar. Then I took the pickup out of my first guitar and stuck it in there, but it didn't sound too good. I don't really go for DiMarzio pickups, because they're real distorted. I like a clean sound with sustain—I hate the fuzz box, real raspy sound. So I put a PAF magnet in a DiMarzio pickup and rewound it by hand, which took a long time. I actually ruined about three pickups, and by the fourth time it worked. I didn't count the windings—I just did it by sight.

*Was that the guitar you took on the second tour?*

I used that one plus the original one from the first album for the first half of the tour, and then I ran into Floyd Rose [2727 NE 145th St., Seattle, WA 98155], and he showed me his special bridge and nut for keeping a Strat in tune. I said, "What the hell—I'll give it a try." I'm up for anything. So I had Boogie Bodies [Box 1244, Puyallup, WA 98371] make me a mahogany body that's fit to my size, and I put the Rose device on it. The body is a Strat-style, but it's 2½" thick, which is thicker than a Les Paul. The Rose tailpiece gets a thin sound, and I thought a chunky piece of wood could make up for the tinkiness. It works a little bit. That guitar has a Gibson PAF and just one volume knob—it's real simple.

*What is your overall opinion of Floyd's vibrato device?*

I like it and I don't. For one, on my guitar it sounds real brittle-bright, and I have to do some heavy equalization to get my tone. That's why I don't like to use it in the studio. We just go in there and play live, and I depend on making my guitar sound good out of the amp instead of fixing it in the mix. Number two, if you pop a string, you can't even one-note your way through because the whole guitar goes out of tune. Sometimes I'll hit a chord and tune really quickly. With this device you can't—you have to unclamp it. On top of that, sometimes when I jump off the drum riser the neck shifts just a hair, and then I can't tune it. But it has advantages: When you're using the bar, it *will not* go out of tune.



NEIL ZLOZOWER

*What are the most difficult aspects of building your own guitar?*

Making the neck fit the body. Another problem is that the strings on a Stratocaster are spaced differently than a Gibson's; if you use a humbucking pickup, the strings don't line up with the pickup poles. So I've tried slanting the pickup so the high *E* string will be picked up by a front pole and the low *E* will be picked up by a rear pole. For the sound I like, it is also important to get the space between the bridge and pickup right. I do it almost like a Les Paul. If I put it too far towards the neck I get the Grand Funk and Johnny Winter [*GP*, Aug. '74] tone, and if I put it too close to the bridge I get a real trebley Strat sound. So I move it up towards the neck a little bit from the Strat sound to get a beefier tone.

*Continued*

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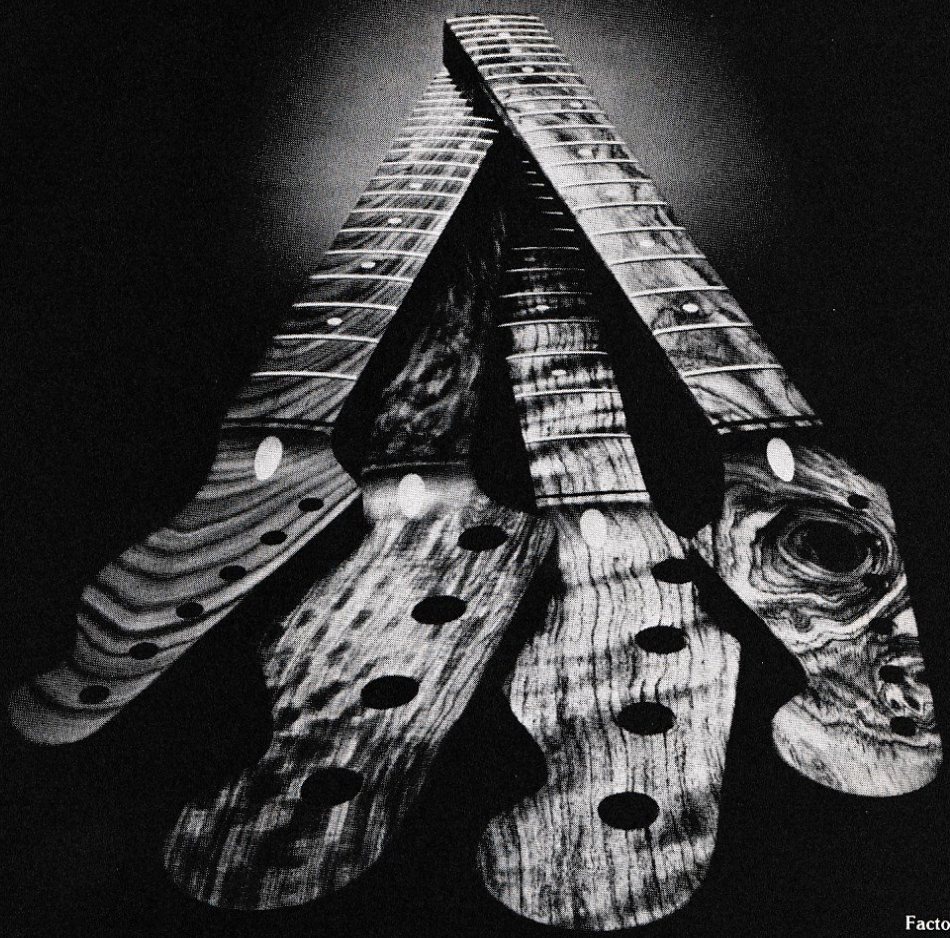

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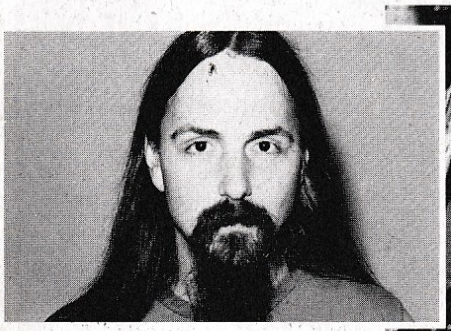

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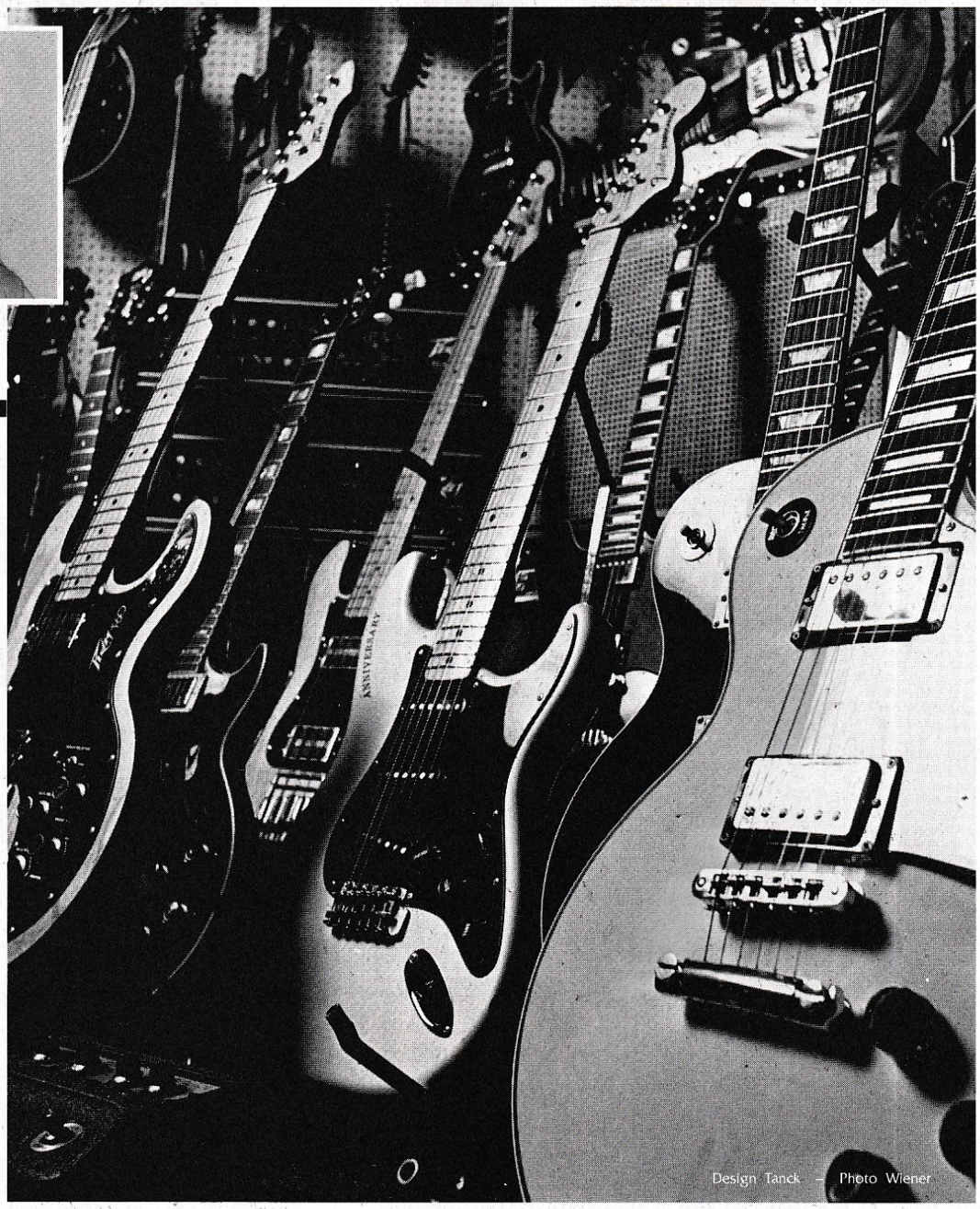


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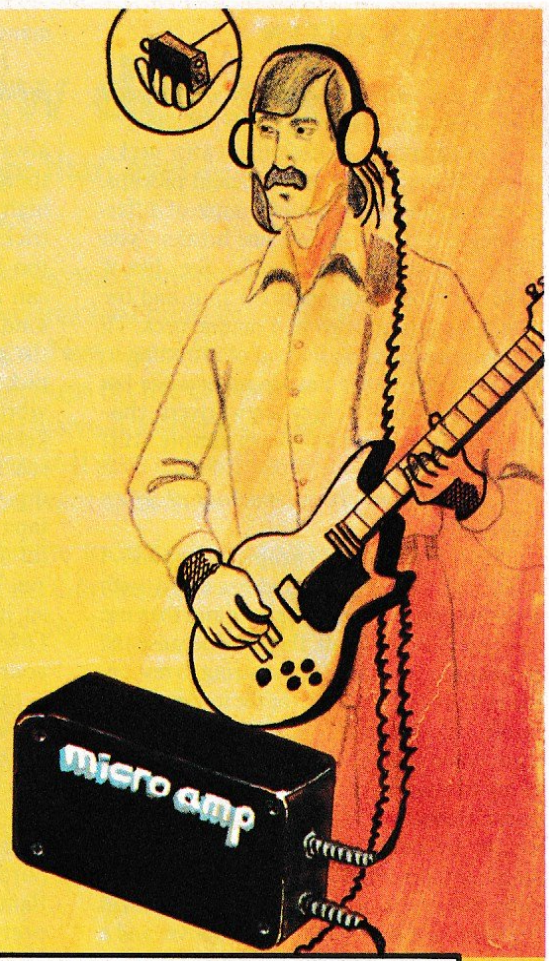


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## EDDIE VAN HALEN

*Do you carry any special tools or extra parts with you when you're on the road?*

I bring along at least five extra necks, three different bodies, ten different pickups, some machine heads, and a couple of different tremolo pieces in case one breaks—you know, just spare parts mainly. See, like if we're six months through the tour and the frets are starting to go bad on one neck, I'll slap another neck on instead of refretting it, because I don't have time to refret while I'm traveling. In tools I carry screwdrivers, chisels, drills, chainsaws—very simple stuff [*laughs*].

*Have you any special methods of refretting necks?*

Yeah. I hate the way people refret necks. I do it real simple: I sand them down with some 400 wet-or-dry sandpaper and then use some steel wool. I hate flat frets because the more space you have for the string to rest on, the more room you have for the intonation to be off. I like big frets height-wise, but I make them come to a peak. From a side view, one of my frets would look like the tip of a pick. It doesn't come to a complete point, but it would be rounded as opposed to flat. Another thing is that you have to put them in right. Fender has a machine that puts them in from the side rather than from above, and a lot of people take them straight out and rip the wood. I toured the factory and saw how they did it and said, "No wonder I ruined so many Fenders by pulling them straight out!"

*Do you do anything special to your pickups?*

I usually use old Gibson PAFs, and I always pot them. I submerge the whole thing in paraffin wax, and this cuts out the high obnoxious feedback. It's kind of a tricky thing because if you leave it in there too long, the pickup melts. I take a coffee can and melt down some wax—the same kind that you use for surfboards—and put the pickup in it. See, one of the reasons a pickup feeds back is that the coil windings vibrate, and when the wax soaks in there, it keeps them from vibrating as much. It will still feed back, but it's controllable. After I dip the pickup in paraffin, I put copper tape around it. You have to be really careful if you do this to a pickup like a DiMarzio. You can throw an old PAF in there and let it soak it up; it doesn't melt. But with DiMarzios, if you blink, all of a sudden your pickup's ruined.

*Do you own any stock factory-made guitars?*

Yeah, I have a new Gibson ES-335, and two '58 Les Paul Jrs.—a single-cutaway and a double-cutaway. I've got a whole load of Japanese Strat copies. I also just purchased two vintage Les Pauls—a '59 flame top and a '58 gold top. These are pretty much in immaculate condition. I bought them as an investment; I don't play them. My main stage guitars are the ones I build myself for under $200. I have an acoustic, too—the one I used on "Spanish Fly." It's an Ovation nylon-string, not the real expensive model. I've never owned a steel-string.

*Are there any guitars that you'd like to build in the future?*

I'll have the next one built, and it will probably be difficult and cost a lot of money. What I'd really like now is like a three-quarter sized 335. I was playing a 335 for a while before we got signed, and it sounded fine. But the other guys would go, "Come on—you look like Roy Orbison." Really, here's this little skinny punk kid playing a Ted Nugent axe, you know. They said, "You're rock and roll; you ain't Roy Orbison. Either get some dark glasses or get rid of the guitar." So I dumped that and started playing the Les Paul again. So what I would like is a 335 to fit my body, and maybe not quite as hollow as some 335s. I'd like a solid beam all the way to the back of the guitar and maybe a little extra wood in there. The one I have now lacks a little bit of tone—it's too acoustically toned, too hollow.

*Would you put a vibrato bar in the 335?*

Yeah. I love 335s. I can haul ass on those things. When I pick up a stock 335, you probably wouldn't even recognize my playing. It's more jazzy, more fluid and fast—kind of like Allan Holdsworth. One of the reasons I started using a vibrato was that my playing got so fast it was just too much. So now I break it up a little bit. It's like a race car racing down the road and then crashing every now and then.

*Continued*

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## EDDIE VAN HALEN

*What are your views on using a vibrato bar?*

It's more of a feeling as opposed to an effect. I don't really use it for freak-out effects; I use it to enhance a little more feeling. I really don't have any special chops with it. I just grab it when I feel like it. It calls for a totally different technique. I have special tricks for keeping it in tune, but it still goes out. You have to play with it. Like if you bring the bar down, the *G* and *B* strings always go sharp when you let it back, so before you hit a barre chord you have to stretch those strings back with a real quick little jerk. The vibrato is actually like another instrument. You can't just grab it and jerk the thing and expect it to stay in tune.

*How do you keep tuned while using a standard vibrato?*

It's a combination of a lot of things. For one, some manufacturers don't keep in mind that the distance from the bridge to the machine heads has got to be a straight line so that the string windings won't get caught anywhere. A lot of people drill the machine holes off center, and the strings get caught up. I have extra-wide notches in the nut, and string trees for only the high *E* and *B* strings. I also set the vibrato bar so I can only bring it down; you can't pull back on it. See, I rest the palm of my hand on the bridge, so if I use a standard vibrato, I sound like a warped record. Sometimes I'll bring the bar down before I hit a note and then let it up.

*What's the advantage of playing with your hand on the bridge?*

I like getting a muffled effect with the side of my hand. It gets more tone. It's a definite texture you can use in combination with straight picking.

*How do you hold your pick?*

Between my thumb and middle finger. Sometimes when I play fast I'll put the tip of my index finger on the corner of the pick.

*Do you ever use your other fingers to pick?*

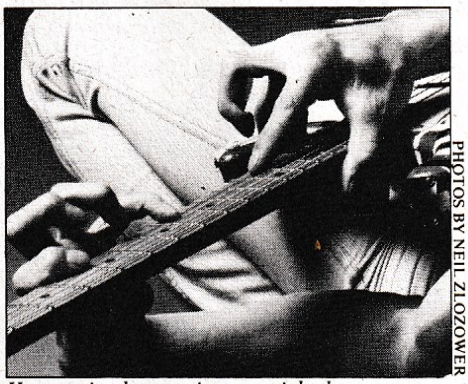
No. I can't fingerpick for anything. I've never had the time.

*Did you use a pick for "Spanish Fly"?*

Yeah, except for the part near the end that sounds like Montoya [*GP*, Sept. '71] or something.

*Do you ever use the side of your pick to get high-pitched harmonics?*

Sometimes. I do it in "I'm The One" [*Van Halen*]. I also get harmonics by hitting a note with my left-hand finger while I tap my right index finger on the fingerboard exactly one octave up. When it's an exact octave, you bring out the harmonic plus the lower note.



PHOTOS BY NEIL ZLOZOWER

*Hammering harmonic; note pick placement.*

*Do you tap right on top of the fret wire or behind it?*

*Continued*

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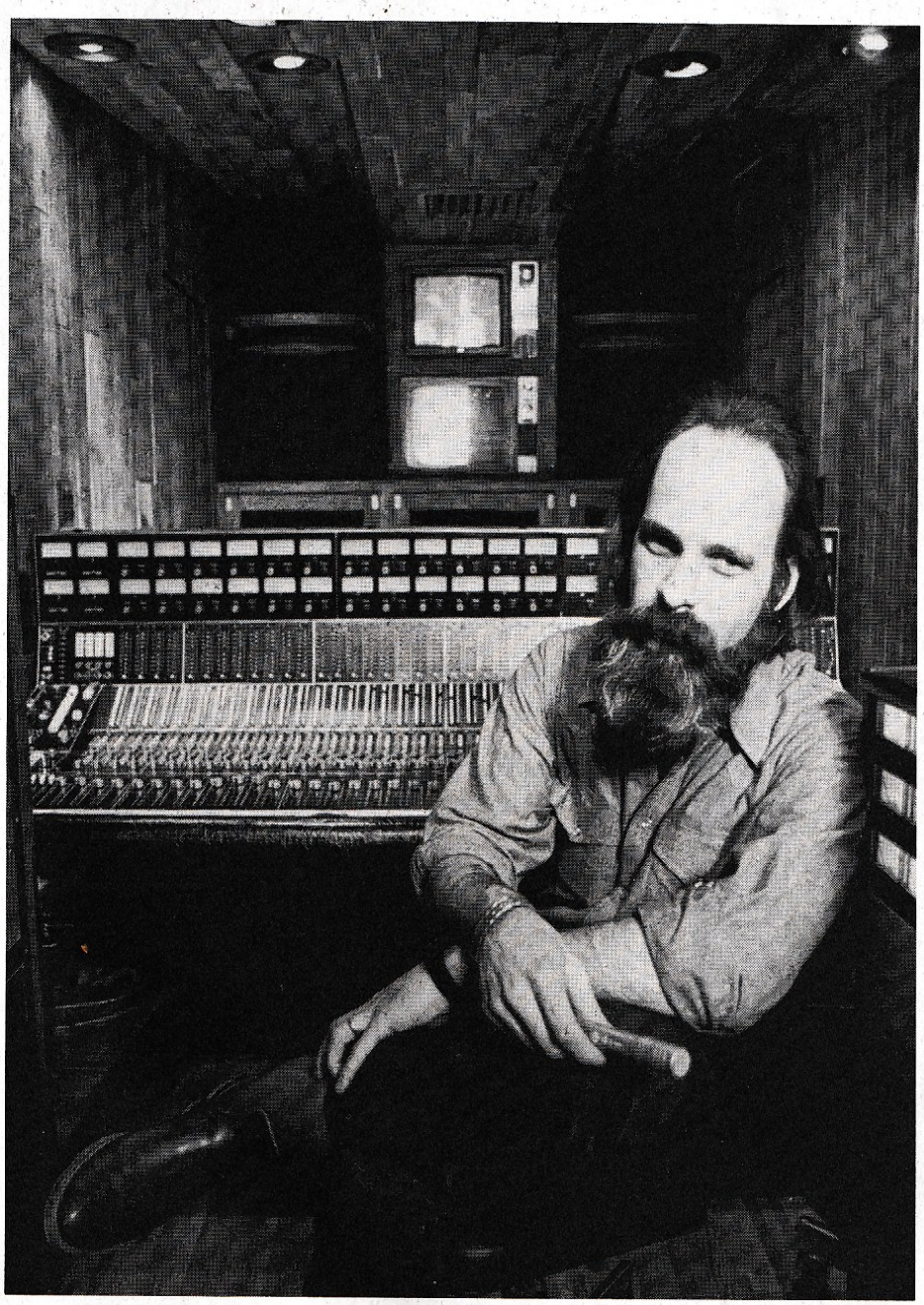

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## EDDIE VAN HALEN

On the fret, I guess. Like in "Spanish Fly" I start out by tapping harmonics and then do hammer-ons and pull-offs with my left hand while I tap above with my right-hand index fingertip. Now this is my latest: I hammer-on and pull-off with my left hand and reach behind my left hand with my right and use my right index finger below my left hand, so that it acts as a sixth finger. In other words, my right-hand finger changes the lowest note. See, the way I play is in my fingers. I could play a Strat or a Les Paul, and it's going to sound like me. People say, "Oh, how do you get that sound?" They could play my guitar and it wouldn't sound the same. I have a style of playing where no matter what amp or guitar I use, it sounds like me.

NEIL ZLOZOWER

*How far can you reach on the fingerboard?*

On the high *E* string I can reach from the 5th fret to the 12th. From the 12th fret I can hit any note on the fingerboard above. That's how I get weird noises.

*Are you learning new things on the guitar all the time?*

Yeah. Like if I sit down and play by myself I play completely different than I would with the band. I just really go for feeling in my playing. All our albums have mistakes—big deal, we're human. But they reek of feeling, and that, to me, is what music is all about. It's not like Fleetwood Mac—you know, they spend so much time and money on their albums. I think that if something is too perfect, it won't faze you. It'll go in one ear and out the other because it's so perfect. Like our stuff, to me, keeps you on the edge of your seat. It builds tension whether you like it or not. It slaps you in the face.

*Like in "Ice Cream Man"* [Van Halen] *when the band comes in?*

Exactly. It's almost like you're just waiting for us to blow it—waiting for something to go wrong, but it doesn't. That's what creates the feel, the tension: just like winding something up and waiting to see when it's going to break. It's just inner feelings coming out; it's not conscious. The way I play is the way I am.

*When you're playing onstage, what do you think about?*

Nothing. It's like having sex, actually. I swear to God. It's definitely my first love. Got in a fight with my girlfriend before. I used to go over to her house and play my guitar in her bedroom, and she'd go, "You love your guitar more than you do me!" And I'd go, "You're right!" Hey, I'm sorry—it's part of me.

*How many times a day do you pick up a guitar?*

All the time. Sometimes I play it for a minute, sometimes half an hour, and sometimes all day. There's no schedule; I don't run by schedules at all. Usually I play before I go to sleep, when I wake up, when I come home, when I'm bored.

*Do you usually use an amp?*

When I'm at home I use a little old white Fender Bandmaster. I plug into the extension speaker so I can crank it all the way up and it fuzzes out. It's actually like at full volume. You get tube distortion and it sounds real good. Like a Marshall has two outputs, and you can use either one and get a full output. With the Fender, you have a main speaker jack and if you want the extension one to work, the first one has to be plugged in. If you bypass the first one and just plug into the extension speaker, you get a real low signal, but you get the same sound as if you plugged into the main one. You blow a transformer every eight months, but it's worth it. It sounds great. That's what I use at home.

*What do you look for in a solo?*

Feeling. I don't care if it's melodic or

*Continued*

# String Along with *FRETS*

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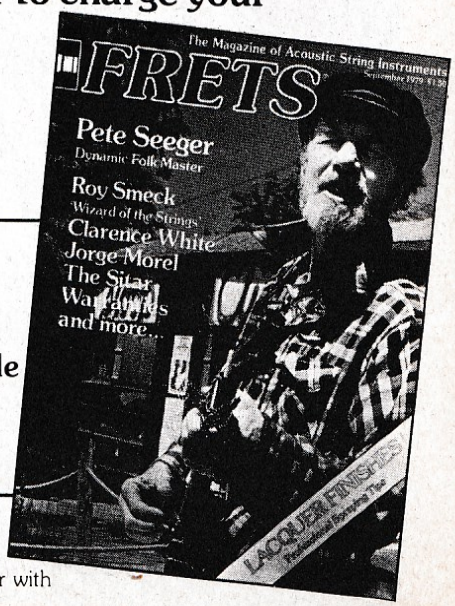


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spontaneous. If it's melodic and has no feeling, it's screwed.

*What should a good rock and roll song do?*

Move you in any way. Depress you, make you happy, make you horny, make you rowdy. Anything. If it doesn't, it's like Fleetwood Mac! Excuse me, I should point out that I love *Rumours* [Warner Bros., BK 3010]—that's a hot album.

*When your band is putting together new material, do you work on both the words and the music?*

No, Dave writes the majority of the lyrics and I write the music. I don't consider myself a songwriter to begin with. I've written songs on the piano, but they're not Van Halen. It's very easy to write a song on the piano. You just pick some chords and squeeze a melody out of it; I learned that in school. So when I write on guitar I always come up with a theme riff—you know, some powerful opener—and then a verse, a chorus, a bridge, a solo, back to the bridge, chorus, and then the end.

*How do you decide what to do with the solo?*

Sometimes it's spontaneous, sometimes it's set. Like the solo in "Runnin' With The Devil" [*Van Halen*] was set. And the same with "Ain't Talkin' 'Bout Love" [*Van Halen*]. By "set" I mean that I figured out something melodic instead of just going for it. When I wrote "Ain't Talkin' 'Bout Love" I thought it was about the lamest song I ever wrote in my life. It took me six months before I even worked up the nerve to show the guys, but kids go nuts for it! I love the beginning—*Am* and *G*.

*What were some of your spontaneous solos?*

"Ice Cream Man" was one—that was a first take. The solo in "You Really Got Me" was totally spontaneous. Next time you listen to it, turn the balance to one side, because the way Ted [Templeman] produces, my guitar is always on one side. Listen to it—there's only one guitar, no overdubs. But it sounds full.

*Do you repeat solos from night to night, or do you change them around?*

I rarely repeat. Sometimes I remember the way I did it on the record and kind of follow it, unless they are melodic solos like in "Runnin' With The Devil" and "Ain't Talkin' 'Bout Love." You know, if I start noodling around, kids go, "Hey, that ain't the same song!"

*Are there some songs you stretch out on in concert?*

"Feel Your Love Tonight" [*Van Halen*]. My guitar solo without the band, definitely ["Eruption," *Van Halen*]. "You Really Got Me" ends with a long jam.

*It sounds like a lot of your solos are built off of lines rather than chords.*

Well, the thing is, in rock and roll you only have so many chords. If you start hitting chords like this [*plays 7ths and 9ths*] in rock and roll, forget it! They have emotion, but they don't fit power rock. They're so dissonant that the vibrations of the overtones with that much distortion sound like shit. That's why most rock and roll songs are simple—straight major or minor chords. You start dickin' with chords like the 7ths and 9ths through a blazing Marshall, and it will sound like crap. It's very tough to come up with an interesting solo when you're just in one key. But see, there are ways to get around it—you can be playing in *E* and you can solo in *D*. There are certain chords that are relative to the key you're playing in, like in the key of *A* you can play around an *F#m*.

*You seem to end a lot of phrasings with a blues feeling.*

Yeah, well, I started out playing blues—the *Blues Breakers* album [London, LC 50009] where Eric Clapton's on the front reading the Beano comic book. I can play real good blues—that's the feeling I was after. But actually I've turned it into a much more aggressive thing. Blues is a real tasty, feel type of thing; so I copped that in the beginning. But then when I started to use a wang bar [vibrato], I still used that feeling, but rowdier, more aggressive, more attack. But still, I end a lot of phrasing with a bluesy feeling. I like phrasing; that's why I always liked Clapton. He would just play it with feeling. It's like someone talking, a question-and-answer trip.

*Continued*

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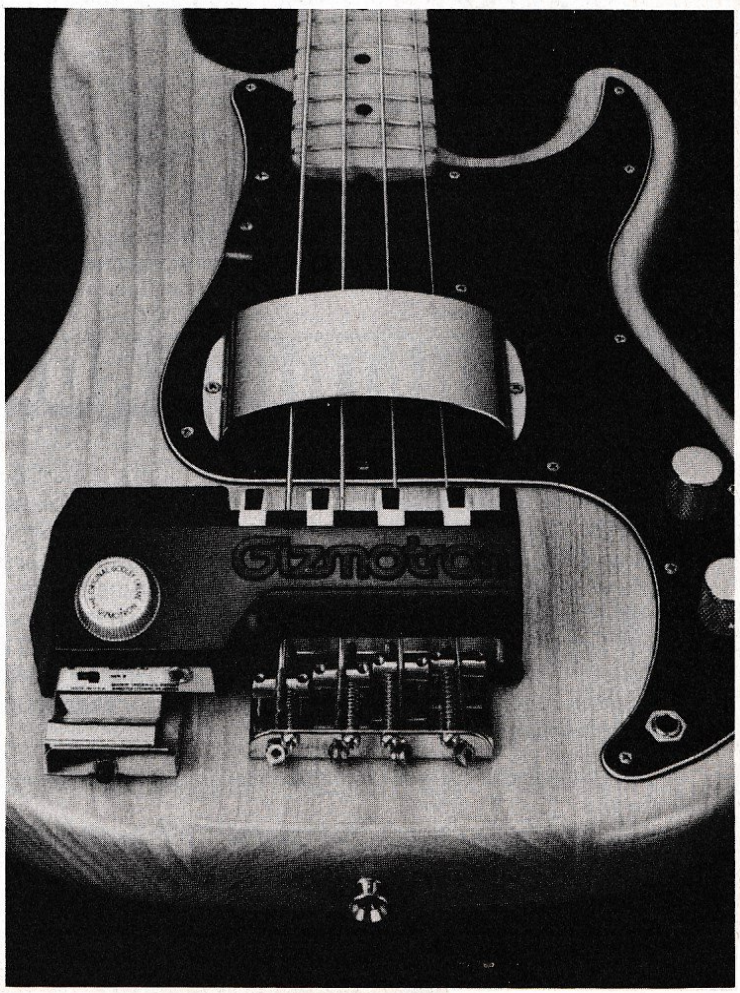

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## EDDIE VAN HALEN


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*On your records, Michael Anthony's bass parts are subdued compared to what you do. Is this intentional?*

Yeah. He's a damned good bass player. He plays *bass*. He's not a Jack Bruce [Aug. '75]—he doesn't play guitar on bass. When Al and Mike are playing, it's an open world for me. I can do whatever I want. They're right there backing me up, feeding me. Whereas if he was a Jack Bruce, I'd be in competition with him. Everyone is hot, but in their own pocket. A lot of it has to do with the mix on records, whereas live it comes off much better, much more powerful. I kind of like it because most bands sound like hell live and great on records. I think we sound good on record but better live. I'm totally happy with our records, but live it comes out better.

*How do you warm up before going onstage?*

Just scales. Fast or slow, depending on how cold my fingers are.

*Do you put new strings on every night?*

Yeah, Fender 150XLs. I stretch them to death. With that new Rose thing, I boil the strings so they stretch, because if you just put them on and clamp it down, the strings stretch out on the guitar. I just take a pack and let it boil for 20 minutes in the hot water. And then I dry them in the sun, because otherwise they rust. But I only use them one night anyway, so who cares if they rust?

*Does anyone take care of your guitars besides you?*

Rudy Leiren—he's my roadie.

*How do you tune up before a show?*

I tune all my guitars myself. We tune a quarter-step down, so it's like right between *E* and *E*♭; this is for vocal reasons. I used to tune down to *D*, but Mike couldn't get his bass tone—he'd get too much slap. When we go in the studio, man, I don't strobe tune or anything. I just pick the guitar up and if it's in tune, I say, "Mike, tune to me," and we play. Why does it have to be the same? Who says it has to be tuned to *E*? Why the rules? Fuck

the rules! I mean the main reason I get all the weird stuff I do on guitar is because I don't do it by the rules.

*Do you experiment with open tunings?*

No, because that's kind of a rule too that's been done. I don't care that much about things that have been done, where most players have only done what's been done. They look at the guitar as if that's all it's for. They don't even go beyond to think. Like they don't know how I get some of the weird noises I make, but it's just the guitar. Just do anything to it! I could drop a guitar and get a noise out of it. The guitar is not designed for one purpose—you can do anything with it. I'll do my damnedest to squeeze every noise out of this thing I can.

*What is your philosophy on using effects?*

What I'm really into doing is squeezing anything out of the cheapest possible thing. Like whenever I get something made or built or designed I always say, "Make it as cheap as possible." I'll walk into this music store where I buy all my stuff, a place called Dr. Music [3727 E. Foothill Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91107] and they laugh at me. Because I ask them what thay have, and they go, "Oh, got this new this; got the new digital delay or something or other," and I go, "Got anything cheaper?" Because I can get weirder noises out of them than the expensive state of-the-art shit.

*Do you feel the state-of-the-art ones have too much control in them?*

They don't have enough. You pay so much, and they're so precious. You can't take them around, you can't kick them, you can't drop them. If you every saw my pedalboard!

*What's in it?*

It's a piece of plywood with two controls for my Echoplex on it, an MXR Phase 90 that I've had for years, and an MXR flanger. They're all taped to a piece of board with black duct tape. And like a lot of big-name players laugh themselves silly when they see it, but after they hear me, then they go, "Can I plug in?" Some of these guys have got four out-of-phase switches, and a this and a that, and a biamp crossover, and blah, blah, blah. And I just go, "Is it on? Is it working? What's it for? What's it do?" I can't tell! At least when I use an effect, you know I'm using it. My main tricks are in my amps.

*What kind of amps are you now using?*

Well, in the studio I use my old Marshall, my precious baby. It gets a slightly different sound. Live I use new Marshalls. I made the mistake of taking my main one out on the road last year and I lost it on the way back from Japan. It was flying around India somewhere and six months later, thank God, I got it back. This is the one I bought when I was a kid. I didn't even know what I had until now. It's very old—it has a Plexiglas front. It used to be the house amp at the Pasadena Rose Palace; whoever played there has played through it. It's a real good amp—unbelievable balls!

*How do you modify your amps?*

Okay, I use a combination of two different kinds of amps. They're both Marshalls, but one kind actually has less power than the other, which is boosted. I use them together. The ones that have less power have a giant capacitor in conjunction with the fuse; if anything happens, the fuse blows first. The capacitor has something to do with the computerized ignition system of a car. I can't give you the exact specs, but it looks like a stick of dynamite, only fatter. What it does is suck juice. I hook it up to the fuse holder and the mains, and it lowers the voltage about ten volts so the amp lasts a little bit longer. It doesn't really change the sound, but whatever I use, I use to the max—I just turn it all the way up. So this capacitor lowers the voltage and the amp lasts a little longer. I still have to retube them once a week. [*Ed. Note: This is not a recommended procedure for modifying amps and should not be attempted by anyone inexperienced in the field of electronics and amp modification.*]

*What is done to the other kind of amps?*

I use a Variac, which is like a dimmer on a lighting system. It's an autotransformer which goes all the way from 0 volts to 160. In the studio I crank it up to 140 and watch the tubes melt! [*Ed. Note: Again, this is not a recommended procedure for modifying amps as Paul Rivera of Rivera Research And Development (Box 641, Tujunga, CA 91042) points out: "You can cause severe damage to the amp besides melting tubes. Since a Variac is an exposed transformer, by hooking it up incorrectly you could get the hot of the AC line on the chassis of the amp and electrocute yourself. Anyone wishing to attempt this sort of modification should go to a knowl-*

*Continued*

*edgeable repairman."]*

*Do you lose many amps during your shows?*

Yeah, but I have so many of them. I have like 12 to 15 100-watt Marshalls onstage in pairs of four, hooked up together. Then I have three switches where if the first stack blows, I can switch in the next one. That's about it for live. I have such a big setup: 80 12" speakers for my last setup, which was the equal of 20 Marshall cabinets. The next one will be World War III. But it's not for over-blitzed noise.

*Is it to refine the sound?*

It's to make a good tone even louder. Some people get a sound like an amplified AM radio. I like it to be like a nice home stereo amplified—you know, the difference between tone and no tone. I have some other tricky stuff in my amps which I don't even want to talk about because if someone reads it in the magazine they are going to hit up Jose, an old guy from Argentina who knows a lot of tricks and does stuff for me. He doesn't want people to know who he is because he's getting mobbed. He also puts little things inside my MXR stuff—like permanent gain controls that boost when I kick them on. I don't even know what they're called. They reduce noise and boost the signals.

*Do you have the sound you want?*

Sometimes. It depends on the arena, depends on my mood. It's dependent on a lot of things. I'll tell you, the best sound I ever get is sitting home alone playing through that little Bandmaster cranked on 10.

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*Eddie (R) in concert jamming with bassist Michael Anthony.*

*What do you use as an onstage monitor?*

We use two giant Showco [9011 Governor's Row, Dallas, TX 75247] M-4s [four-way cabinets], which are actually like a complete system in themselves. They have the highs

and lows and everything. The only thing I add to the mix is a teeny bit of my voice, so I can hear if I'm in tune with my guitar and my brother.

*Do you ever have trouble hearing yourself?*

Never. Dave and Mike won't even come to my side because I'm so loud. But there is a difference between being just loud and having what I call a warm, brown sound—which is a rich, toney sound. I guess a lot of people are tone deaf and can't figure it out because they just crank it up with a lot of treble just for the sake of being loud. Anyone can do that. I can actually play so loud onstage that you won't hear anything else, but I don't really like to do that. I like to get a balanced sound.

*How loud do you play in the studio?*

Very loud. I use four 100-watt Marshalls, which are cranked up to close to 600 watts with the Variac. I like to feel it, you know, make my arm hairs move. If you stand in front of a big PA you vibrate—it's the way I get off. I don't wear ear plugs, either, so I'm surprised I'm not deaf yet. We used to get kicked out of clubs because I refused to turn down. It's the only way I could get a sound—crank it all the way up.

*Do you use wireless transmitters?*

Yeah, I always do because I bounce around a lot. My first one was a Schaffer-Vega [10 E. 49th St., New York, NY 10017]. It took me a long time to get it working right with my system because at the time my amps were so powerful that the thing was overdriven and wouldn't work. It was too much power. Then when I got weaker amps I could use it. If you use it with too high of an amp it will just freak out; you get the weirdest feedback noises you ever heard in your life. And then I got a Nasty Cordless [Nady Systems, Box 2205, Berkeley, CA 94702]. Now the Schaffer-Vega is tuned to a fixed frequency, and one of the advantages of the Nasty is that you can dial in the frequency, just like a radio. The Schaffer-Vega has a built-in compressor in the transmitter, which is kind of cool, depending on what amp you use it with. I think that the Nasty is weaker. Like with the Schaffer-Vega I'm always reaching at my knob, trying to get 11 out of it instead of 10. And with the Nasty, I'm reaching for 14, so I use an equalizer to boost it. But it is actually a cleaner sounding system. When we played the Budokan in Japan I couldn't use either one because there were heavy radio signals everywhere.

*When you go into the studio to record, how ready are you?*

We're ready with the structure of the song—that's about it. We jam on tunes a few times in the basement. When I get to the studio, I tell Ted, "Just put a mike to my amp; let's get going." You know, they are always dicking around with the mikes, the speaker mix, Al's snare tone, and this and that. I really get sick of that because I'm just sitting there ready to go: "Come on, let's go while I feel like playing." You know, after four cups of coffee and a bottle of wine, I don't feel like playing. And then they yell, "Let's go—we're ready."

*Do you have a good idea of what you're going to play?*

Solo-wise, no.

*Have you ever tried recording direct-to-disc?*

I wouldn't mind. We record very live. The only thing that I think wouldn't work on direct-to-disc would be vocals. See, I stand right next to my brother when I play. I don't use headphones; neither does he. If I was playing direct-to-disc, how could I sing, playing at that volume, unless I played in a booth, separated. Then I just wouldn't get the vibes of playing with Alex.

*Let's discuss some of the parts you did on the* Van Halen *album. How did you do the descending growl at the end of "Eruption"?*

That's a $50 Univox EC-80 echo box, a real cheap thing that works off a cartridge. It's like a miniaturized 8-track cartridge. One day some kid turned me onto it and all of a sudden I hit a note, turned it all the way up, and got that growl. I go, "Whoa!" So I mounted it in an old World War II practice bomb that I picked up in a junkyard. I've read reviews in papers that have said, "Eddie Van halen with a synthesizer solo." Actually all it is is a $50 piece of junk.

*Did you plan the solo in "I'm on Fire"?*

No. It's so funny—I wanted to do a melodic solo and the guys go, "Pretend you're

*Continued*

## EDDIE VAN HALEN

John McLaughlin [*GP*, Aug. '78]!" So then that solo came out. I don't even know what key I'm playing in! I just started playing and it fit perfect. That's how a lot of it works—totally spontaneous. It's not like I decided, "I'm going to start here and end up there."

*How did you get that scratchy sound in "Atomic Punk"?*

A phase shifter was on, and I rubbed the strings by the bridge with the heel of my hand—I've got calluses on it. I do the same thing on "Everybody Wants Some"[*Women And Children First*]. I just love doing weird things.

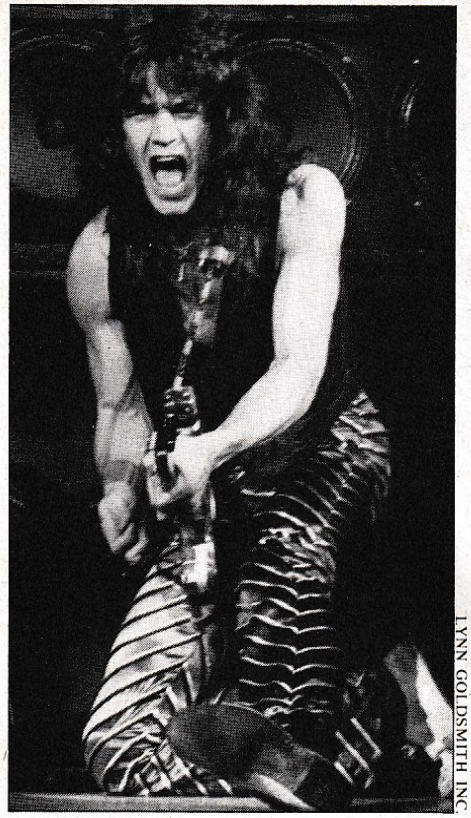
*What's the sound at the opening of "Runin' With The Devil"?*

Car horns. We took the horns out of all our cars—my brother's Opel, my old Volvo, ripped a couple out of a Mercedes and a Volkswagen—and mounted them in a box and hooked two car batteries to it and added a footswitch. We just used them as noisemakers before we got signed. Ted put it on tape, slowed it down, and then we came in with the bass. It sounds like a jet landing.

*How many tracks did you use for "Ain't Talking' 'Bout Love"?*

Two. I soloed on the basic track, and if you listen *real* closely on one channel, I overdubbed the solo with an electric sitar.

*In the solo section of "You Really Got Me" there's a staccato part that sounds like a car lurching. It's right before Dave starts in with the "Ooohs" and "Ahhhs."*



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Yeah. I hit the *G* string at the 7th fret and bent it up to [the note] *G* and flicked my toggle switch back and forth.

*Was there much of a difference in how the first and second albums were recorded?*

I don't think we spent as much time on *Van Halen II*. We toured from the second week in February until December 5th, 1978 and then on December 10th we went into the studio. We didn't spend as much time getting the sound. I like the guitar, but I'm not particularly pleased with the drum sound. I like the drum sound on the first album much better.

*On the songs "Somebody Get Me A Doctor" and "You're No Good" you have an effect that sounds like a volume pedal.*

That's just the knob of the guitar.

*Did you double-track the harmonic intro to "Women In Love"?*

Yeah, I played it twice. It sounds like a harmonizer, and live I get the same effect using the harmonizer. I like that chime, clocklike sound.

*How long did it take you to cut* Women And Children First*?*

We finished the music in six days, and the whole album took eight. I don't understand how people can take any longer. I'd say we did it for between $30,000 and $40,000.

*What is the strange effect at the beginning of "And The Cradle Will Rock"? It resembles the sound of a prop plane starting up.*

I pinged my strings above the nut and asked Ted to play it backwards so the attack comes at the end of the note. In conjunction with this, I scraped the springs in the back of my guitar. I also took my vibrato bar all the way down so that the strings were limp and

*Continued*

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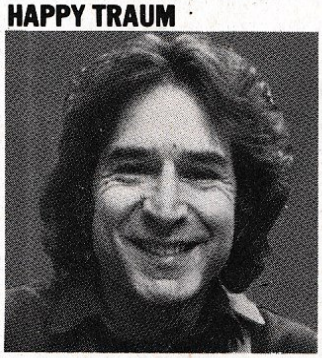

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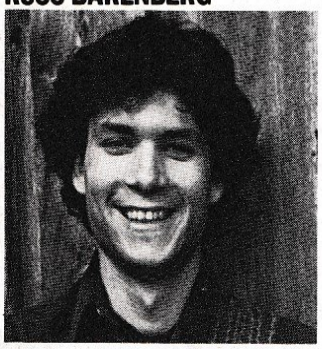

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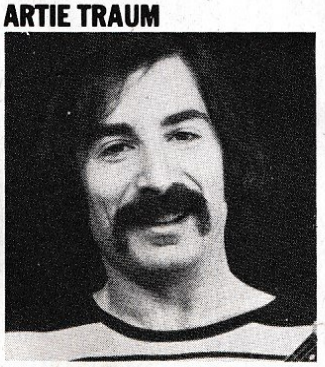

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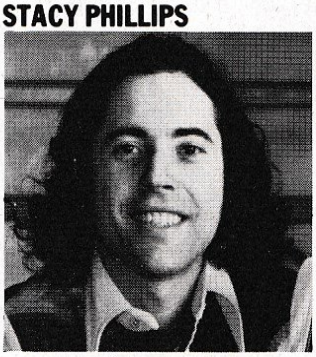

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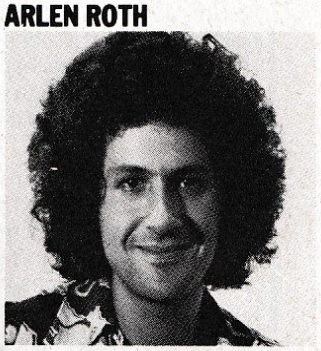

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## EDDIE VAN HALEN

then with my left thumb I flapped the low *E* string around the 3rd fret. Sounds great; I love it.

*Is there a piano later on in that song?*

Yeah, it's a Wurlitzer electric piano that I ran through my MXR flanger and my Marshalls. I just banged on the keys—broke two of them doing it. Who would ever think of doing anything that lame? But it sounds good. You could never tell I had classical training on piano. I bought that piano in Detroit and started pounding on it one night in the bus and wrote "And The Cradle Will Rock."

*How did you do the clicking sound in the middle of "Romeo's Delight"?*

I shook my low *E* string against the pickup.

*What kind of a 12-string did you overdub in "Simple Rhyme"?*

It's a Rickenbacker electric. At first it didn't sound right through my amp, and I asked Ted, "Can you doctor it up later in the mix?" Then I told him to forget it. I wanted to make it good out of the amp before it's recorded. My theory is if it doesn't sound good coming out of the speaker box, it ain't going to happen on tape.

*How did you come to play acoustic slide on "Could This Be Magic"?*

They just handed me a guitar and a slide and said, "Come on, you can do it." I said, "Okay, I'll do my best." And I never in my life ever even played slide before! I'm going, "No, let me practice," and the guys said, "Come on, man, just play." I pulled it off decent. I think I used an old Gibson acoustic, and it was in standard tuning.

*Your part almost sounds Hawaiian.*

Yeah, it does. It almost sounds like Andy Griffith on the front porch. We wanted to get a horse in there at the end, or a cow going, "Moooo." That song is funny as hell! That's one thing—slide never interested me, because you're going like that [*moves little finger up and down fingerboard*]. Why? I like to use all my fingers.

*You don't have an instrumental on this LP.*

No. What for? Maybe later on I'll do one if I figure out some finger thing that's just totally different. "Eruption" was the first one, and then the second one I did was in a flamenco style ["Spanish Fly"], but it was still the same type of thing. And what could I do this time? I didn't want to do one just for the sake of doing another solo, so I'm going to wait until I have something really good. Something that sounds classical—electric or acoustic—like some Bach stuff. I've been listening to a lot of classical music, especially Debussy. God damn, that mother wrote some hot shit!

*Have you ever thought of doing a solo album?*

I never will until maybe years from now. All of my energy goes into Van Halen; it's my family. I'm not going to leave my family until

*Continued*

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one of the members passes on. But still, I have a whole backlog of tunes that we've never done. So if I ever do a solo album, which I don't see in the near future, I'd have plenty of ideas.

*Has seeing other guitarists ever inspired a change in your playing?*

Allan Holdsworth—that guy is bad! He's fantastic; I love him. He's got a rock *sound*. I love his solo in "In The Dead Of The Night" on the *U.K.* album [Polydor, 6146]. I love the solo in "Hell's Bells" on *One Of A Kind* [Polydor, 6205]. [Drummer] Bill Bruford plays hot on that album. Holdsworth is the best in my book. I can kind of play like him, but it doesn't fit our style of music. He's a real artist. He plays a guitar like mine, too. He wears it up high, like a jazz guitar. I could play all that stuff, too, if I played with my guitar up that high, but how would a rock and roll kid look with a guitar up like that? I do have to sacrifice the amount of movement I do onstage for the way I play. I like playing much better on a stool. I don't do it, though, not even in the studio, because then it would sound like I'm sitting on a stool.

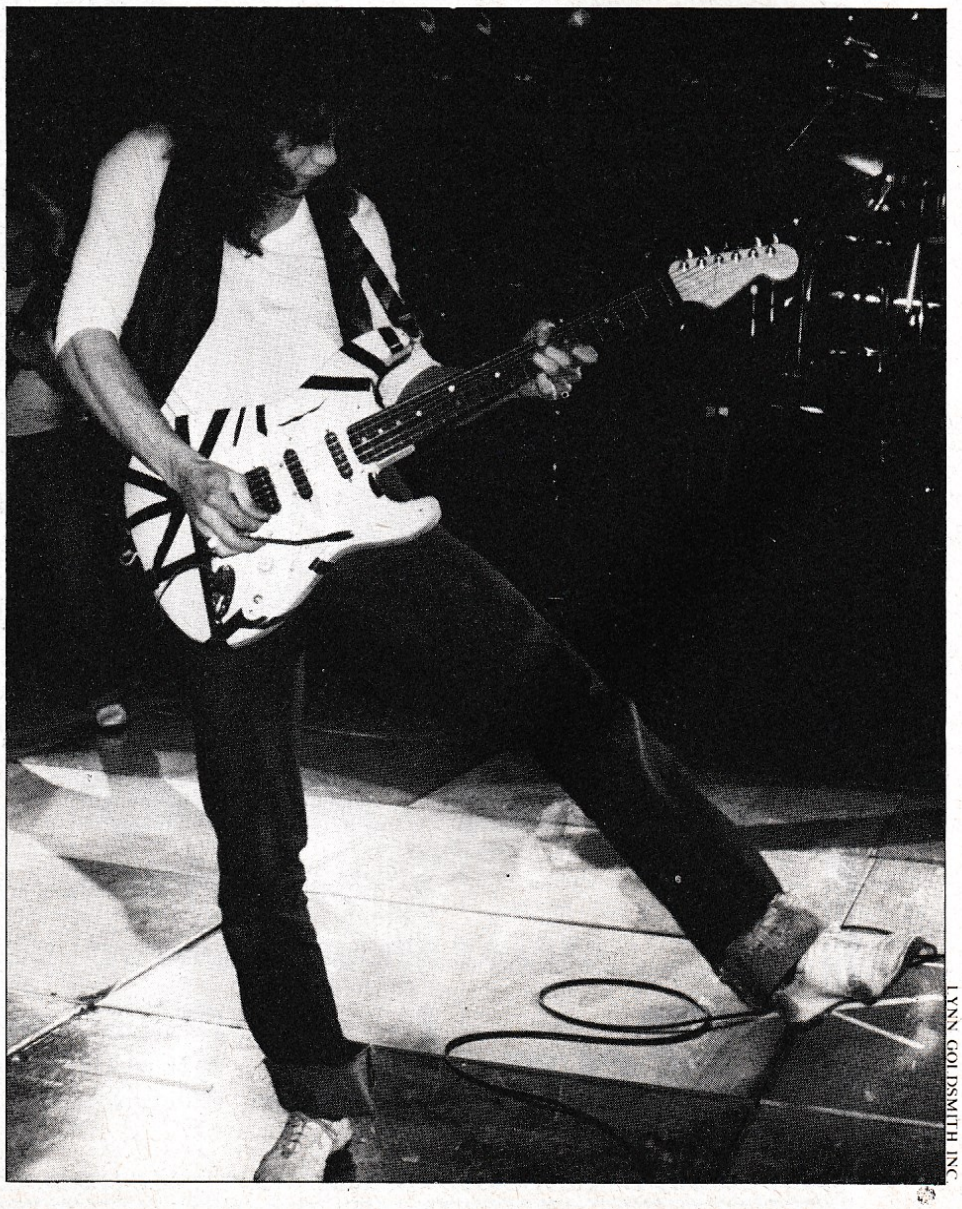
*So the movement of your body is really tied in with the way you play?*

Definitely. 100%. I never do anything the same. I have no choreographed steps where I have to be in any part of a song. I'm wherever I want and do whatever I want whenever I feel it.

*Are there other players you like to listen to?*

Randy Hansen [*GP*, July '79] is hot. I know him real well; he's a good friend. Now he's coming out with his own stuff, and I hope to God he succeeds. Rick Nielsen is very funny; I love the guy. He's [Bowery Boy actor] Huntz Hall. They [Cheap Trick] are the comedians of rock and roll, whereas Kiss are the circus of rock and roll. The reason I think we're happening is because we are one of the only *real* bands out there. We're not punk, we don't dress weird. We play good music—or at least *I* think so. Half of the critics think it's thud rock bullshit. They label us heavy metal old hat. Name me a heavy metal band that's done what we've done. I sound like I'm bragging, but I don't mean it that way. I'm not saying that all the things I come up with are genius-brand riffs, but neither is punk. Punk's like what I used to do in the garage.

*What do you think when you hear other*



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*players using your licks?*

I guess they always say that imitation is the highest form of flattery. I think this is a crock of shit. I don't like people doing things exactly like me. Some of the things I do I know no one has done, like the harmonic runs and the clock chime-like sound. The "Eruption" solo—I never heard anything done like that before, but I know someone must have figured some of it out. What I don't like is when someone takes what I've done, and instead of innovating on what I came up with, they do my trip! They do my melody. Like I learned from Clapton, Page, Hendrix, Beck—but I don't play like them. I innovated; I learned from them and did my own thing out of it. Some of those guys out there are doing my thing, which I think is a lot different.

*Do you feel that your playing is constantly progressing?*

I don't think it's ever progressed—just gets weirder all the time. How much can you progress? I'm as fast as I can possibly get. I can't picture myself being too much faster. I mean, you can only hear so much. What I'm trying to do is be weirder and different.

*Do you get in slumps?*

Yes and no. You always reach a plateau, and then moving up from there is a bit tough. But for me it's not that hard.

*How do you do it?*

Just continue to play and play and try different chops. It's especially hard for me after touring for ten months and playing the same songs. Now, depending on the beat of the song, I play differently. I'm a very rhythmically oriented guitarist; I really work off of rhythm, so if the song's fast, I play a certain way. If it's blues, I play completely different. So if I do the same set for almost a whole year, I get into a rut of that style, and it takes me a month or two to change and come up with new things. That's my rut.

*How do you prepare for a tour?*

What we do is go into a small room or a basement for two weeks and do physical training. It's like getting ready for a boxing match—real heavy duty jumping around, going through the set. We play without a PA, just instruments. Then we rent a big place and do the full show. I'll tell you, I'd sell my guitars to go on tour. It's a world vacation, a way of life.

*What's it like?*

It's living out of a suitcase, being in a different town every night, getting a squeeze here and there, seeing the world, experiencing different cultures—Japan, France, Germany. It's traveling. I've always wanted to travel and make music.

*Do you find that you get enough time alone?*

We have that sometimes. See, like if we play Paris and we party out too late that night, I'll sleep and pass on the sightseeing. But sometimes I'll pass on the party and take a day and go out and trip around. So it's whatever you want to do.

*Do you make money on tours?*

*Continued*

## EDDIE VAN HALEN

We break even because we put all our money into sound and lighting. We tour to sell records; the only thing that sells us is our live show. Everything we do is a complete reverse of other people. All we ever knew was our live show. Like when we went in to record the first album, I said, "Hey Ted, I've never done overdubs." Just the thought of playing to a machine, to me, would lose feeling. So I said, "Can I just play live?" You know, go for what you know. So I did and Ted freaked out. He said, "Whoa—it doesn't even *need* another guitar." What we did was apply our live show to plastic, whereas people like Boston and Foreigner do it the opposite way—they work it out in the studio and then have to rehearse before they go on tour. Live shows are the bottom line for us. On this next tour, we're going to be taking out the largest lighting system ever taken on the road.

*What's it worth?*

Money-wise, I don't even know. I know it's taking all of our money, though. We're betting the whole wad that we will sell. And if not, then we won't. But we always bet our all—give it all or nothing. We are not about to go, "We can save a little money here if we don't do that." We design what we want, have it built, and then say, "How much money have we got?" If we don't have enough, we say, "We've got to get it."

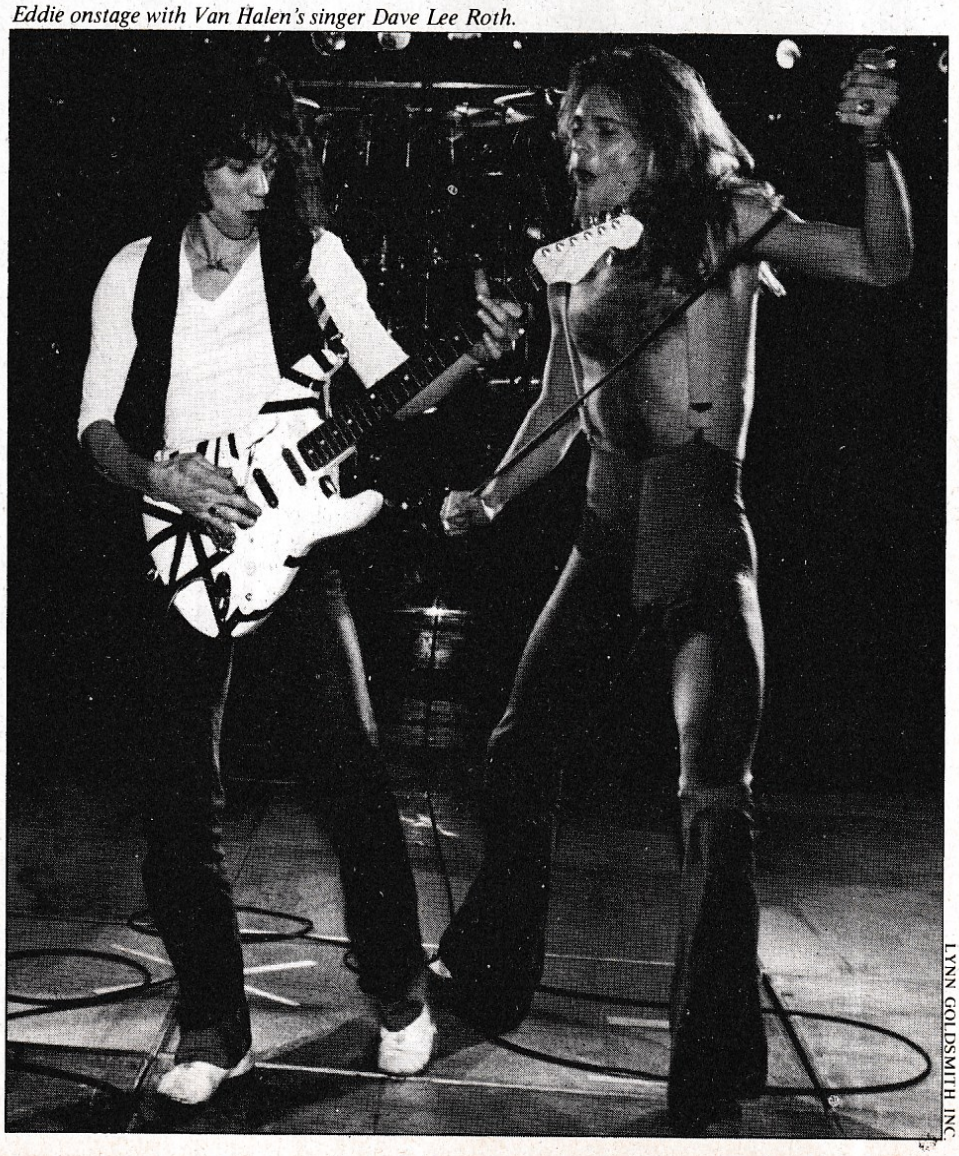
*So you look at money mainly as a tool to advance your art?*

I don't even look at money. So far the only thing I've done with money is retire the old man and stuff like that. I haven't bought anything for myself except for my guitars and my Jeep. You know, I've got everything I want, which is music, a squeeze now and then, and a car you can mess around in. It's mainly music: That's all I really care about. [*Sings "It's my life and I'll do what I want."*]

*Has the attainment of success—stardom some would say—matched what you imagined it would be?*

To tell you the truth, I'm not into the star bullshit at all. A lot of people get off on it—let their hair grow long, buy a Les Paul and a Marshall, and be a rock and roll star. I don't even consider myself a rock star—I enjoy playing guitar. Period. I had an English class where I had to do an essay on what my future plans were—what I wanted to do in life. I said I wanted to be a professional rock guitarist—not a rock star. What is a rock star? It's a mystical image kids have. I'm considered a rock star because kids label me as one. That's kind of why I hate going out partying and playing the part of a rock star, because I don't know how a rock star is supposed to

*Eddie onstage with Van Halen's singer Dave Lee Roth.*



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*Eddie tuning up before a show.*

act. If I act too normal, they'll go, "Oh, that's him? That's all he is? And if I act too much like, "Hey, I'm a bitchin' rock star," they go, "Hey, this guy's egoed out." So I don't show my face too much. I'm pretty much a loner. I just can't get along with people; they don't understand me. So I spend a lot of time alone, playing my guitar. It's just more satisfying. I don't like to waste my time acting, because I'm no good at it.

*What are the major disadvantages of the rock life?*

The disadvantages of being a rock star is your private life is gone, but your sex life increases. And you have to do interviews. I hate doing interviews.

*Why?*

Because they always fuck me over. I don't feel like I have anything to say, because if I really say what I feel they'll twist and bend it and make me seem like I'm egoed out and that I'm God, you know. But I'm not at all; that's one thing I just never expected. I did an interview once and said that my main influences were Clapton and the usuals. And they said, "Not Jimi Hendrix?" I go, "No, actually I didn't like Hendrix at all, he was too much flash for me. I got off on the bluesy feeling that Eric Clapton projected, although I don't play like Clapton or sound at all like him" which doesn't sound egoed out—I don't sound like him. But when I read it back they made it seem like, "I don't play like Clapton —I'm better than all of them." I called the guy up and said, "Hey, man—that's the last time I'm doing an interview with you," which I guess was bad to do, too. The thing is that kids only know me through what they read. I feel like going door-to-door, saying, "Hey, this is bullshit. Don't believe it." But the kids do.

*How can you keep journalists from exploiting you?*

Don't talk to them. But then again, then they *really* think I'm egoed out. But they don't understand; it's just that I ain't got

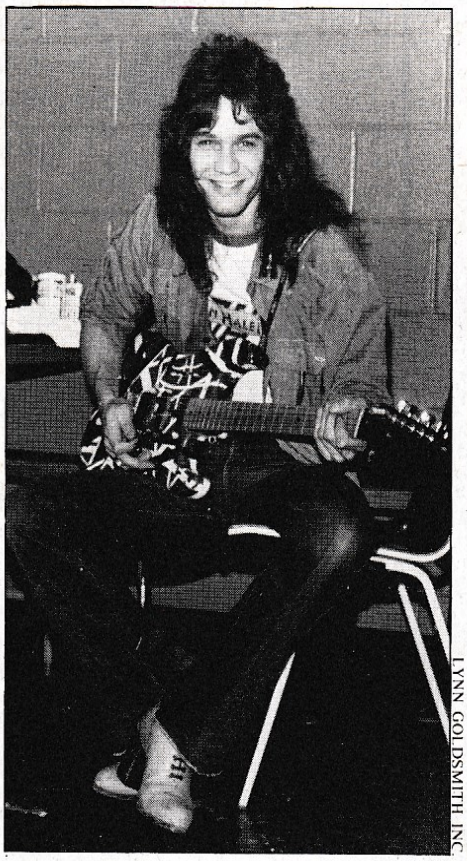
*Continued*

## EDDIE VAN HALEN

nothing to say. Like playing the guitar is part of me. I just feel like saying, "Everything I've got to say is in notes." It really is. I project more feeling out of playing than I can with my mouth. I'm no extrovert—I'm a quiet person. That's probably why I do all those weird things on guitar. The only thing I like talking about is the guitar, which is why I wanted to do this interview.

*How do you view your career with the band?*

We're looking at it as a lifetime thing, like the Stones. We're not out there for the quick buck. A lot of acts burn themselves out by playing all those stadium shows; they overexpose themselves. They just grab the bucks and go for it. I don't care about money. We need it to survive, but I can survive with whatever—musician soup, if I have to. We put our all into the music and the production. Look at the greats: Elvis, the Who, the Stones—they have no gimmicks, they're



LYNN GOLDSMITH INC.

personalities. And that's what we are, too, or that's what we need to keep striving for. It was kind of scary when all these bands were doing a glitter trip a few years ago. We had to gamble—should we go that way or just bet on ourselves? It's a lot easier to have a gimmick. But if you lay your personality on the line and they don't like you, you're gone. So far we've gone the personality way, and it's worked. And that's how a band lasts—being real. We're not bullshitting the people; we're not a circus.

*That spirit comes through on your records.*

Well, it's our whole attitude; it's the way we feel. We're there to party with the people. We're not there to show off. We're not out to prove anything, although we do have an aggressive attitude towards everything we do.

*What do you picture yourself doing in 30 years?*

Same thing we're doing now. That's what I want. I don't know what's gonna happen in the future—maybe somebody else in the band will get egoed out and quit or something—but I'd love Van Halen to be forever. And if not, I know I can always make it playing guitar somewhere, because I'm getting hit up left and right now—"Will you play on my record, will you do this, will you do that?" And I go, "No. Van Halen is my family. I'm not gonna wash your dishes; I'll wash dishes for Van Halen alone." ■

## LETTERS

*Continued from page 4*

I would like some assistance in locating four misplaced guitars. With much time, work, money, and sentiment invested in them, they are sorely missed and may have surfaced by now. The first two are likely to be in the New England area. One is a Martin D-35, serial number 338786, with a 1/4" phone jack near the rear strap peg. The other is a 1952 Gibson Les Paul. It has no serial number and was altered with two large Gibson humbuckers, a Schaller bridge and string stop, and Grover pegs, and it has a cherry sunburst finish exposing a curly rock maple top and quarter sawn (zebra striped) markings on the neck. The name "Don" is scratched into the neck adjustment cover. The other two guitars are more likely to be found in Florida or Georgia. The first is a cherry sunburst Gibson Les Paul reissue, #678441. The other is a Fender Telecaster with a blonde body and neck and a DiMarzio PAF humbucker pickup between the stock pickups. A hand-painted mountain scene is on the face, and scroll work is on the back. Substantial rewards are available for the recoverer of any of these fine instruments.

Peter Shackett
Mad Beach Band
25 Lynn Way
Madeira Beach, FL 33708

I want to get something out that has been bugging me for a long time. It's about Jimi Hendrix tapes and films. Why haven't they all been put out? I remember reading a long time ago that he jammed for about three hours at Woodstock, and what got released? About 30 minutes altogether on albums, and we got to see him play only a couple of jams on film. The *Jimi Plays Berkeley* movie came closest to showing him in concert, but how about one with all the raps and tune-ups included for that total Hendrix flavor? I also remember reading that some 300 hours worth of tapes were found in Electric Ladyland Studio. I'd love to hear them just as they are—like on the British release *Loose Ends* [Polydor, 2310], not watered down like on *Crash Landing*

*Continued*

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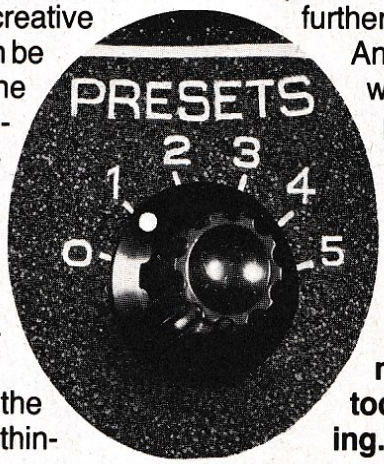
The new SYNARE S3X with its preset selector allows you to switch from sweep with modulation to chime sounds instantly during a live performance. Now you can be super creative because each of the six selections can be individually adjusted and tuned. For the first time in electronic percussion history you will have confidence in finding that hard-to-get sound again and again. Whether you're playing a run or accents, SYNARE preset electronic drumming will electrify your audience and stimulate your performance.

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## LETTERS

[Reprise, MS 2204] and *Midnight Lightning* [Reprise, MS 2229]. God knows how many tapes of him are around. I just wish that people who own the films and tapes would forget about diluted commercial packaging and put out a collector's series of uncut tapes and movies. There are a lot of us who would really appreciate that.

Tony Granger
Philadelphia, PA

Ry Cooder's [*GP*, Mar. '80] comments concerning vintage instrument dealers, while they reflect a common sentiment among musicians, indicate that his perception of this market is, at best, shallow. While I agree that some dealers of vintage guitars may be "morally reprehensible" and out to make a fast profit, guitar dealers as a group are no more or less ethical than the rest of humanity. As for Ry's statement, "If I paid $700 for my F-4 mandolin, which was high in '65, what the hell is it worth now?", the present price for such an item would be in the range of $1,250-$1,500. A comparison of costs of fuel, housing, food, value of the dollar, etc. from 1965 to the present reveals that the "morally reprehensible" dealers have driven up the price of his mandolin less than inflation has affected most other commodities. I have little doubt that Ry presently charges many multiples of the price he got to perform in 1965, yet I would not criticize him for this. Ultimately, nobody can charge more for a product than the public thinks it's worth—especially if the people are able to live without it. I wish I were one tenth the musician that he is, but perhaps Mr. Cooder should take the time to reevaluate his opinions on the vintage instrument market. The rise in prices of vintage guitars is no more spectacular than the rising prices of new guitars and most other commodities.

George Gruhn
Nashville, TN

The following equipment was stolen on December 26, 1979, from Bill Cody's Saloon in Merriam, Kansas. This equipment belongs to Denver Locke of Kansas City, Missouri, and is sorely missed. There is a $1,000 reward for information leading to its recovery: a Zumsteel pedal steel 12-string that is wine-red color, serial number S127470; a Fender Twin Reverb amp with JBL D-120s, #2-66251; a Fender Twin Reverb amp with Altec speakers, #A738397; a Music Man amp, #D 130; an Alembic F2B preamp, #826; a Phase Linear 400 amp, #18915; and a Conn strobe tuner, #059896. If you have any information, please contact me.

Jeff Day
3601 N. Walrond
Kansas City, MO 64117

Can anyone help me find the October '78 copy of *Guitar Player* with Jerry Garcia, jazz guitar duets, and so on? I can offer for exchange some jazz records, books, classical guitar literature, or other interesting things from East Europe.

Jiri Adam
Merhautova 67
61300 Brno 13
Czechoslovakia

Anyone willing to sacrifice an August 1976 *GP* and/or any information concerning the late, great Lowell George, please contact me.

G. Palmer
7105 Briley Dr.
Ft. Worth, TX 76118

In reference to your guitar cords article in the October '79 issue, I'd like to say that a cord with good, effective shielding will not always insure a guitarist against radio interference. A guitar containing a preamp will still pick up a radio signal in a house with the old-style (two-pronged plug) wiring. This happens because, in such cases, radio signals come through the house's wiring, rather than only through the air. To solve this problem, the guitarist needs only ground the socket he uses.

David Ragone
Vienna, VA

I am totally overwhelmed with Rich Kienzle's article, "Western Swing Steel" [Dec. '79]. As a new swing steeler, I eagerly gobble up any and all information and music that I can find on the subject. I'd like to get in touch with other steelers, young and old, who wouldn't mind sharing their ideas, techniques, tunings, or whatever. I'd also like to contact anyone who has some of the rare albums listed (or not listed) in Rich's story. Long live western swing!

Bob Ingram
1923 Jackson Rd.
Vicksburg, MS 39180

[*Ed. Note: In the Arthur Smith interview in the Feb. '80 issue, Myrtle Beach was mistakenly reported as being in North Carolina. This fine city is, in fact, still in South Carolina.*]

## FROM THE PUBLISHER

*Continued from page 3*

"He's worried about his smile." "We can't have the acne showing." "Hide the paunch." "He's concerned about revealing his thinning hair." Some people want to look older than they really are, others have a certain image they want to preserve, and others don't want their fans to realize they're over 30. You get the idea. But they often forget that *we* like a good-looking cover photo, too.

A cover seems like a rather easy thing to put together—you know, some type, a decent picture, four colors of ink, and a zillion pounds of paper. But then, there are those egos I mentioned.

By the way, lest you think that this month's cover artist gave us any grief, no way. Eddie Van Halen couldn't have been easier to work with.

* * * *

Because of his extensive recording commitments, Lee Ritenour was unable to send us a column this month. We'll look forward to his return next issue. See you then.

— JC

# GUITARING

**Free demo recording.** The University of Sound Arts is offering a limited number of LA-based bands the opportunity to record multi-track demos free of charge. Bands, producers, and managers interested should contact David L. Fry by writing him at the University of Sound Arts, 1508 Crossroads of the World, Hollywood, CA 90028, or calling (213) 467-5256 weekdays between 1-7 PM.

**Free recording seminar.** Nationally-known author and electronics expert Craig Anderton will present a free seminar on home recording techniques on Wednesday, April 16, at Mau's Music in Concord, California. Special emphasis will be given to budget recording techniques, how to record multiple tracks without using a multi-track machine, and new developments in home recording. For further information and free tickets write Mau's Music, 1450 Monument Blvd., Concord, CA 94520, or call (415) 676-3151.

**Believe it or not.** At the 1970 NAMM music trade show in Miami, Florida, the Harmony Company had on display a giant 9′ working replica of a Sovereign model acoustic guitar.

[*Ed. Note: If you are planning events that are noteworthy to guitarists (master classes, lectures, exhibitions, festivals, etc.) or have special items of interest and would like to inform* GP*'s readers, send us details at least three to four months in advance. List the name, date, place, and a description of the event. Also, give a contact address and phone number for further details. Address your correspondence to Guitaring c/o* GP.]

# Guitar Player Magazine's Music Dealer Advisory Board

FOR NEARLY FOURTEEN YEARS **GPI**'s PUBLICATIONS have utilized advisory boards of artists to help us stay on top of musical trends, upcoming performers, technical developments, and the like.

With that same approach in mind, and with the objective being to keep in touch with the music store side of the picture, **Guitar Player** proudly announces the formation of its **Music Dealer Advisory Board**.

Shown here are the fifty charter members, music instrument and record store executives who were selected from the nearly 4,000 retailers who carry **GPI**'s magazines. These dealers were chosen based on their locale, their years of association with **Guitar Player Magazine**, and their past willingness to provide input to **GPI** on a variety of topics during that time. We feel these dealers provide us a fair cross-section of retailers, and eagerly look forward to their assistance in making **Guitar Player** even more valuable to the music community. We sincerely thank them for their interest and support.

— Jim Crockett
Publisher

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5502 Belair Road, Baltimore, MD 21206
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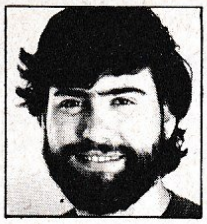


# TOM MULHERN QUESTIONS

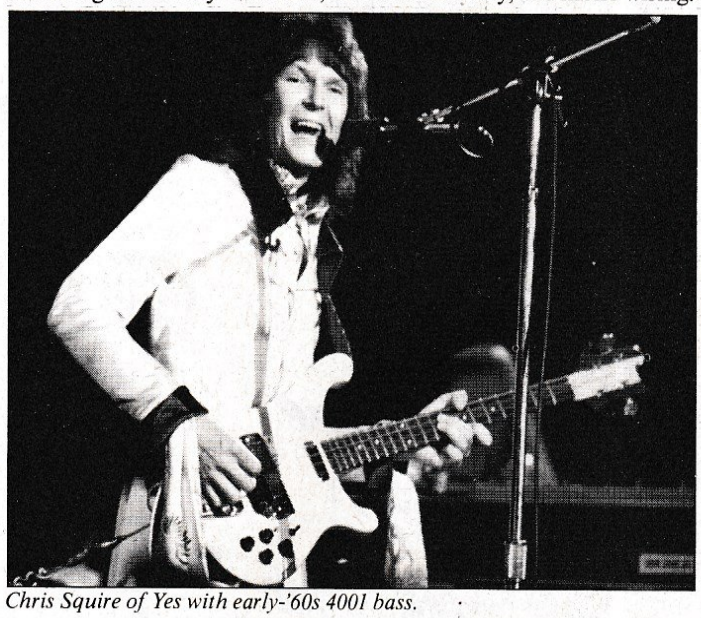
## Send To: Guitar Player, 20605 Lazaneo, Cupertino, CA 95014

**The finishes on a couple of my guitars have become hazy where my right arm comes in contact with the body. Can this be treated?**
Repairman and builder Doug Roomian [Roomian Instruments, 3121 20th St., San Francisco, CA 94110] says that tracking down the exact cause of the trouble may be more difficult than remedying it: "Unless someone has a particularly acidic pH balance, their sweat shouldn't normally cause a reaction with a standard lacquer finish," he says. Some other possible causes for the hazing could be exposure to vinyl straps, or solvents such as xylene, toluol, and other petroleum-based products lurking in many commercial furniture cleaners and cleaner/waxes; these products shouldn't be used on guitars, but sometimes are. All these can react with the lacquer and dull it. Roomian explains: "If the haze is pretty severe, you can try sanding it with 'wet-or-dry' sandpaper with a #600 [extremely fine] grit. Make sure you wet the sandpaper first. If the problem isn't too severe you can use a rubbing compound such as the one made by DuPont for auto finishes. Be careful not to rub too much; some finishes are extremely thin. Then use something like McGuire's Mirror Glaze compound [also available in auto stores]. To apply these, use cheesecloth or rags made from old bed sheets. After removing the compound and buffing the finish, apply a good lemon oil polish. I use Fiddle Brite [Wm. Lewis & Son, dist. by Norlin]. Periodic cleaning with the lemon oil should keep the finish shining. If the hazing problem is too widspread or is unaffected by cleaning or rubbing, check with a qualified repairman. Your guitar's problem may extend below the exterior surface and therefore require special attention, perhaps refinishing.

**What effect does running my amp at high volume have on my speakers?**
There are several factors involved, including average loudness, the type and frequency range of the instrument being used, and speaker efficiency (sound pressure level-to-wattage relationship). First, the speaker is a combination of several parts that work together to produce sound. It consists of a wire voice coil which is attached to a speaker cone and suspended from a cloth or paper "spider" inside the field of a large magnet. (The speaker cone is suspended from a "surround," which is similar to the spider.) When the amp's output — alternating current — passes through the voice coil's wire, it causes the coil to act as an electromagnet. This interacts with the large, fixed magnet, moving in and out as the current changes polarity. Because the voice coil and cone are firmly attached, the coil's motion in the magnetic field is conducted to the cone; as the voice coil moves at the frequency of the amplified sound, so does the cone. This then sets the air around the cone in motion, and creates sound. But sound is not the only product from electricity moving through the speaker; heat is produced — sometimes warming the voice coil to more than 300°F. This can actually melt, break, or severely strain the speaker's components. A good way to burn out a voice coil is to use excessive amounts of feedback or distortion while pushing the speaker to its power handling limit (or beyond). Mechanical failure can be caused by sharp transients, or spikes, created by percussive playing (especially by bassists), dropping a mike, turning the amp on with the volume set very high, or loud staccato playing in the bass register. These can cause the voice coil to jump excessive distances quickly — sometimes out of the magnetic gap. The coil may be forced off-center; from then on it will rub against its magnet assembly and eventually burn out. Furthermore, sharp transients may cause the cone to travel excessively and rip the spider or the surround, turning your speaker into a big buzzer or rattletrap.

**What is a tone cluster?**
A tone cluster is a group of successive notes (for example, *C, C#, D,* etc.) played simultaneously. This approach is best illustrated on a piano by using your fist or arm to play as many chromatic notes as possible at one time. Some clusters, however, are more definite, and in the case of orchestrated pieces the notes may be divided among various instruments. On guitar, clusters are often difficult to play because standard tuning makes playing more than two adjacent notes difficult. Transposing the notes to facilitate fingering is one solution, although the thickness of the cluster's texture is often lost. Retuning the guitar's strings to minor or major seconds makes clusters much easier to play. Dividing the notes between two or more guitarists in standard tuning is another alternative.

**When did Rickenbacker first introduce its 4000 series basses?**
According to Charlie Malyszka, Rickenbacker's company historian, the first 4000 solidbody bass was manufactured at their Santa Ana, California, plant in October 1957. Only 10 or 15 were made before 1958, although it was offered in their 1958 catalog. The original 4000 was much heavier than its descendants; its neck ran through the entire maple body and was made from a single piece of mahogany. Today the neck of the 4000 is laminated maple. On the early 4000s Rickenbacker used a single pickup; a metal cover housed a magnet which straddled the strings. This "horseshoe" design was phased out in the early '60s, although the metal cover still remains. The first models also had a gold plastic nameplate on the headstock and a pickguard of the same material; a clear plastic fingerrest was included on the treble side of the pickguard. Metal knobs and a tune-o-matic bridge also adorned the bass. In 1961, the 4001 was introduced, featuring a second pickup (near the neck). This bass had many of the same features of the old 4000, including a dot-inlay fretboard, an unbound body, and mono wiring.



*Chris Squire of Yes with early-'60s 4001 bass.*

It was popularized in the '60s by Paul McCartney, and is available today as the 4001S. Stereo wiring and body and neck binding were added to the 4001 in 1967. Today, the 4000 is available in a variety of colors and has a black plastic pickguard and adjustable mute. Other basses in the series include the thin-line hollowbody 4005 and 4005/6 (6-string bass), the 4002 (similar to the 4001, but with high- and low-impedance pickups), and the 4080, which is a combination of the 4001 and a model 480 guitar in a double-neck configuration. All of the basses have 21-fret rosewood fingerboards, and all but the 4000 and 4001S have wedge-shaped fingerboard inlays and bound bodies and necks (the 4000 has dot inlays and is still unbound). ■

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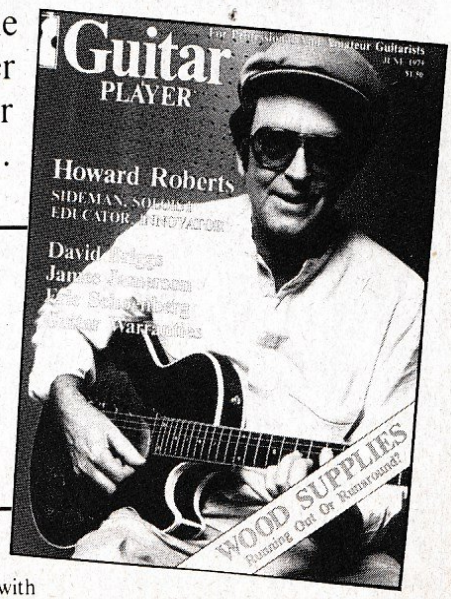


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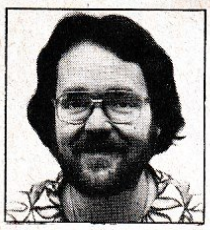
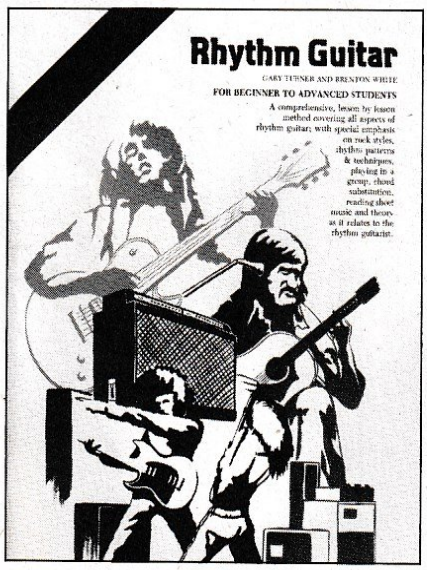


# JIM SCHWARTZ
# BOOKPICKING




**PROGRESSIVE RHYTHM GUITAR,** by Gary Turner and Brenton White. Playing three chords throughout a song might be considered by some to be what a rhythm guitarist does, but not Turner and White. Contained in the 138 pages of their comprehensive style manual are discussions of areas such as chord progressions, turnarounds, bass note picking, alternative chord fingerings, hammer-ons and pull-offs, staccato strumming, barre chording, semiquaver variations, etc., all aimed at helping a player develop his or her rhythm repertoire. Rock, blues reggae, and funk styles are explored using musical notation, chord formula charts, and fretboard illustrations. Whether you're just beginning to play, or have picked for years, *Progressive Rhythm Guitar* should prove to be a valuable rhythm reference source. It may be had for $6.99 from Chris Calear, C/1 The Parkway, Leabrook 5068, South Australia.

**JAZZ LEAD GUITAR: A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO IMPROVISATION,** by Roger Edison. With a little background in how to read basic rhythms (i.e., knowing the difference between a dotted quarter note and an eighth-note) and some facility in playing scales, guitarists interested in improving their jazz chops should find Roger's 64-page softbound book appealing. It is divided into three sections: improvising on a melody, improvising on chords, and improvising on scales and modes. Clearly worded narrative passages, tablature, and notation guide the reader through analysis of areas such as neighbor and grace notes, mordents, slides and trills, arpeggio and chord studies, major and minor scales, modes, and chord progressions. You may purchase the text for $3.95 from the Alfred Pub. Co., Inc., 15335 Morrison St., Sherman Oaks, CA 91403.

**LEAD GUITAR FUNDAMENTALS,** by George Summers, employs on-the-neck fingering diagrams, musical notation, and narrative to explain a wide variety of techniques for developing your rock lead guitar playing. Some of the subjects discussed by the author in his 48-page softbound text are the following: whole- and half-steps, scales, melodies, finger positions, ear training, composing solos, and improvising over chord progressions. At the end of the book is appended a useful chart listing all the scales and modes in all keys. Guitarists from beginners to more experienced players should find *Lead Guitar Fundamentals* a fresh and quick way to become familiar with the fingerboard. It is available for $4.95 from New Horizon Music, Box 12060, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

**A PRO'S APPROACH TO MELODY AND CHORD PLAYING,** by Bucky Pizzarelli. The author includes 12 jazz tunes such as "Tenderly," "Desifinado," "Twilight Time," and others in his 32-page softbound book. Notation, chord symbols, and text describe how Pizzarelli himself arranges songs for recording and/or live performing. Guitarists should be able to sight-read a bit and have a good working knowledge of chords to gain full value from *A Pro's Approach.* You can buy the book for $5.95 from Camerica Pub., 489 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10017.

**GUITAR AND BASS DUETS,** by Steve and Donna Crowell, offers intermediate to advanced players of both instruments material that will assist them in practice and performance situations. Everything from Bach fugues and Latin-flavored tunes to twentieth-century improvisational music can be found in this 28-page softbound book. Chord diagrams also are included for many of the text's nine compositions. *Guitar And Bass Duets* costs $6.00 and is available from SDM Productions, 6916 Hazel Ave., Orangeville, CA 95662.

**ROCK LICKS,** by Joe McIntyre, covers a lot of ground in its 40 pages. Utilizing on-the-fretboard fingering diagrams, the author analyzes the following: basic rock theory, chords, rock/blues scales, bends, hammer-ons, vibrato, pull-offs and trills, string relationships and transposing licks. Beginning and more seasoned players should find the book helpful. A cassette that allows you to hear how to play the various graphic examples is also available. The book costs $5.95, while the cassette sells for $7.95. Both may be purchased from REH Pub., 111 N. 75th St., Seattle, WA 98103.

**GUITAR SEEDS,** by Jack Grassel, covers a great deal of territory in its 139 pages. Novice to advanced guitarists should discover the chord charts and musical examples contained therein useful in developing or expanding both lead and rhythm jazz repertoires. Some of the numerous subjects discussed by Grassel are the following: harmonized scale degrees, chord substitution theory, hand position and arm movement, sight-reading, blues changes and transposition, improvisational techniques, pentatonic and polytonal scales, octave displacement, and single-note string crossing. Jack also includes lists of recommended records and books which explore various playing styles. *Guitar Seeds* is available for $16.00 (softbound) from Jack Grassel, 1584 N. Prospect Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53202.

## Footnote:

**J. S. Bach For The Electric Bass,** arranged by Bob Gallway. Experienced bassists who can read music will find the three duets and five solo pieces in this 18-page spiralbound book to be challenging and fun. Accompanying the text is a cassette on which the musical selections are played. The cost for both is $9.70 from Bolinda Music, Box 5465, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413.

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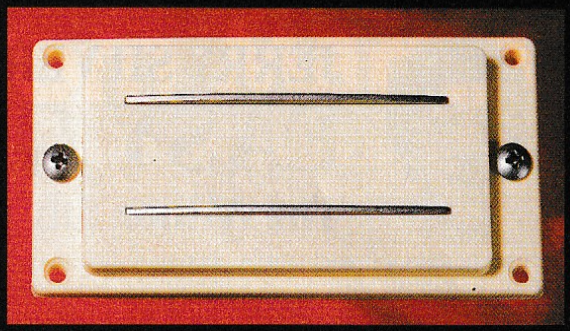

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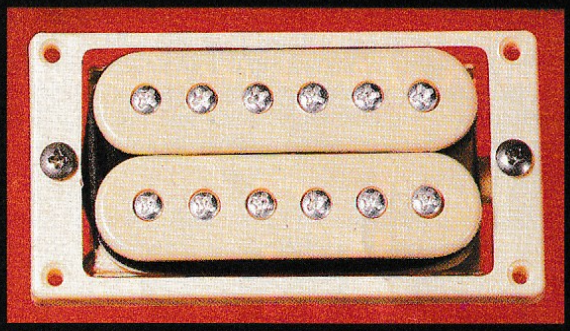

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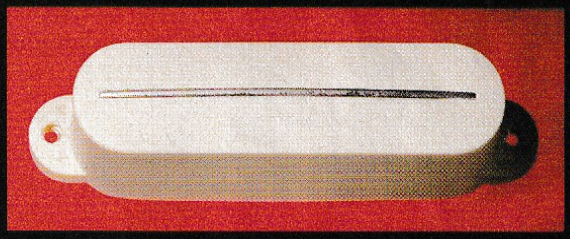

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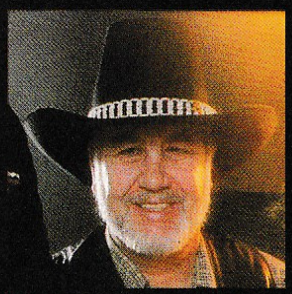

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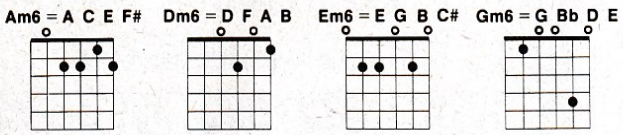
# JERRY SILVERMAN
# EASY GUITAR
## The Minor 6th Chord

TRADITIONALLY, CHORDS ARE made up of thirds — major, minor — stacked one upon the other. Taking into account the various combinations of these intervals, we can make dozens of different chords. First, we have the well-known root, 3rd, 5th configuration of the major, minor, augmented, and diminished chords; the root, 3rd, 5th, 7th of the many 7th chords (dominant, major, minor, diminished, etc.); the root, 3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th of ninth chords; and so on. Given this logical pattern for chord building, what should we make of a minor 6th chord, which has a numerical relationship of root, 3rd, 5th, and 6th? Here, the root, 3rd, 5th sequence has an intervallic relationship of a minor third with a major third on top, and the interval between the 5th and 6th is a whole-step, or major second.

Here are some examples of easily played minor 6th chords. The notes of each one will not necessarily fall in a root, 3rd, 5th, 6th fashion; they are arranged to facilitate playing, rather than to accommodate the theory behind them.

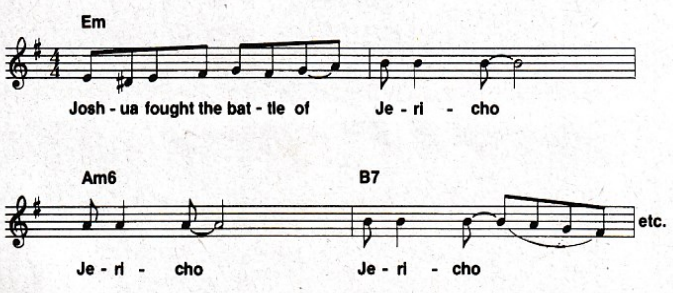



You can hear that these chords have an unsettling quality. It is always risky to try expressing in words the impression a musical sonority has on you, so I hope you understand what I mean after hearing the minor 6ths. In any case, because of its inherent quality, the minor 6th generally serves as a transitional chord, rather than one that firmly concludes a musical phrase.

In minor keys, the minor 6th appearing as IVm6 may lead to the dominant 7th (V7), and then to the tonic (I). To illustrate this motion, we'll use the four minor 6th chords from the first example, and then move to their dominant 7ths and then their tonics.

Am6-B7-Em
Dm6-E7-Am
Em6-F#7-Bm
Gm6-A7-Dm

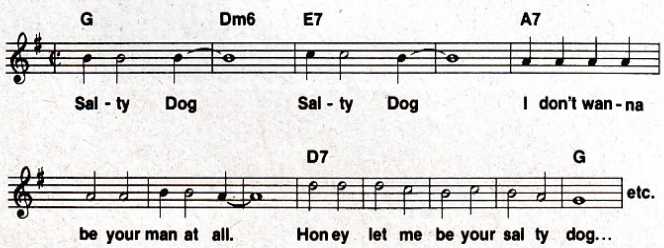
Now let's use the first progression to harmonize a line from the traditional song "Joshua Fought The Battle Of Jericho":



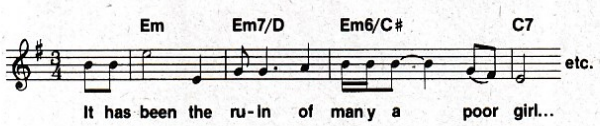

In major keys, the minor 6th chord in the role of a Vm6 leads away from the tonic, and moves in the same direction as the minor progression we used. This time, though, the effect is very different:

D-Am6-B7-E7 (or Em7)-A7-D
G-Dm6-E7-A7 (or Am7)-D7-G
A-Em6-F#7-B7 (or Bm7)-E7-A
C-Gm6-A7-D7 (or Dm7)-G7-C

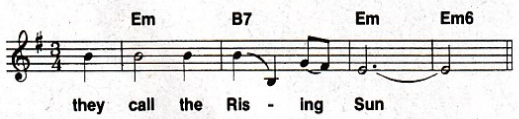
Again, let's apply our progression to a traditional song (in this case, "Salty Dog"):




Sometimes in minor keys, the minor 6th chord's transitional quality arises as a result of holding on to a minor tonic (I) chord for a number of measures, while superimposing a descending scale over it. This effect can be found in "House Of The Rising Sun":




Occasionally, circumstances allow a minor 6th to stand alone, without acting as a transition. The most common is when it is a final, dramatic chord in a minor-key song. In the case of "House Of The Rising Sun," it's Im6:



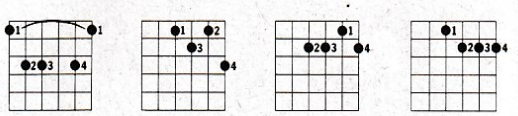

Early in this article I presented the question of how to approach a chord composed of a root, 3rd, 5th, and 6th, when most chords that we encounter are composed of a root, 3rd, and 5th (and perhaps a 7th, 9th, 11th, etc.). Now that you have seen the minor 6th in action, the answer should be in sight: Change the order in which we place the four notes. To illustrate, we'll use the *Gm6*: *G, Bb, D,* and *E*. In the key of *D* minor, it functions as a IV, or subdominant, chord. It then leads to the dominant 7th (*A7*), which in turn resolves to the tonic (*Dm*).

Now let's see what happens when we juggle the notes of the *Gm6* chord so that they appear in a root, 3rd, 5th, 7th configuration. The simplest solution would be an order of *E, G, Bb,* and *D*. The *G* is no longer the actual root, but the notes are otherwise unchanged. This new chord is a diatonic II7 chord in the key of *D* minor. It is built on every other note of the *D* minor scale, and although it appears below as 2nd, 4th, 6th, and 8th, it has the same interval relationship (thirds) as a chord built on the root, 3rd, 5th, and 7th.

What should we call it? Part of the answer lies in the intervals between the four notes. *E* to *G*, and *G* to *Bb* are intervals of a minor third, so those three notes together make up a diminished triad. But because the interval between *Bb* and *D* is a *major* third, the complete four-note chord can't be a diminished 7th (because then it would have to contain all minor-third intervals). The interval from the root (*E*) to the *D* is ten half-steps or a minor 7th. So what we have is a diminished triad with a minor 7th, or an *Edim/m7* (*E* diminished/minor 7th) — quite a mouthful. A slightly more concise name is *E* half-diminished 7th (*Eø7*). For word economy's sake, you can continue calling the chord *Gm6*, but remember that it's also an *Eø7*.

One final word: Whatever its form — dominant, minor, half-diminished, etc. — a II7 chord tends to resolve to V7. In our illustration using the key of *D* minor, the II7 (built on *E*), resolves to *A7*. This explains why even when the chord is shown as IVm6 (in our example, *Gm6*), the movement is to V7 (*A7*).

Here are four movable minor 6th chord patterns. The first name listed refers to the illustrated position.



| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fm6 | Cm6 | Am6 | F#m6(Gbm6) |
| F#m6(Gbm6) | C#m6(Dbm6) | Bbm6 | Gm6 |
| Gm6 | Dm6 | Bm6 | Abm6 |
| Abm6 | Ebm6 | Cm6 | Am6 |
| etc. | etc. | etc. | etc. |

I hope to see many of you at my Folk Guitar/Folk Song Weekend, May 30-June 1, 1980, at the West Mountain Inn in Arlington, Vermont. If you would like more information, call (802) 375-6516. Good music, good food, good vibes!

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# DAVID FRIEND
# GUITAR SYNTHESIZERS
## Echo's Effect On Pitch Perception

LAST MONTH WE LOOKED AT SOME of the reasons that subtle pitch changes (in particular, vibrato) make the difference between an interesting sound and a dull, flat one.

Let's briefly review that discussion, and then go on to talk about reverberation and room ambience and their effects. I suggested an experiment in which you listened to a synthesized tone with vibrato through headphones. If you were able to try this, you observed that it's very hard to hear vibrato when there are no room acoustics involved.

There are several important factors to consider when thinking about room acoustics and their effect on your music:

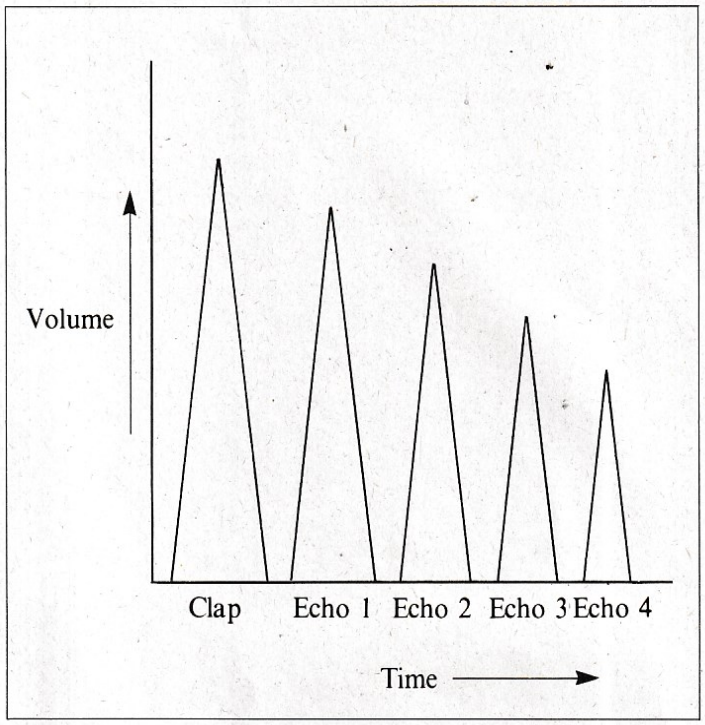
1. Room acoustics can act like "filters," amplifying some harmonics and attenuating others.
2. The ear can easily compensate for changes in harmonic strengths caused by room acoustics.
3. Room acoustics will have different effects on different pitches.
4. Sharp resonances in the instrument, room, PA system, or electronic sound modifiers will throw the harmonics slightly out of tune with the fundamental.
5. Reverberation and room ambience can create a chorus-like effect, but only if the pitch is changing.
6. Headphones are just about the only way to get rid of room acoustics (not that you'd necessarily want to!). Every room has its own acoustical properties, its own effect on your sound.

Since nearly all of the effects that make for an interesting and complex sound depend on pitch motion, the subtlety of a guitar (or a guitar synthesizer) provides an opportunity to interact with your acoustical environment in a way that is not possible with fixed-pitch instruments such as the piano.

Since we discussed the effects of room resonances in some detail last month, you should have gained a little insight into how they effect harmonic content. Now let's focus on reverberation. First of all, there is a big difference between *reverberation* and *echo*, although in the music biz the two are frequently confused. You are familiar with the kind of echo produced by a tape-loop machine (Echo-Plex, Roland Space Echo, etc.), I'm sure. Echoes, of course, exist in nature, but are generally undesirable in a music hall or club. Sometimes in a big, boxy room you can clap your hands on the stage and hear a discrete "clap" bounce off the back wall a fraction of a second later. A multiple echo, such as the kind produced by tape loop machines, has a natural *exponential decay*—that is, the volume of each successive echo is reduced by a constant proportion.

Now, a good room has more than just a back wall for sound to bounce from; there are side walls, a ceiling, tables, pillars, etc. These multiple reflecting surfaces produce many echoes. At some point—experts are in disagreement—the echoes stop being echoes and start being reverberation. In general, if you can hear natural sustain without discrete echoes, then you are hearing reverberation. Usually a room creates a combination of discrete echoes and true reverberation.

Both echo and reverb can play great tricks with moving pitches. Let's examine echo first. A single echo will of course resemble the original sound. So if you are playing a glissando and adding a single echo, you will hear two distinct notes: the one you are playing now and the one you were playing a moment ago. The faster you slide the pitch (or the longer the echo time), the further apart the two pitches will be. If the echo is very fast, or if the pitch changes are very slow, then the direct sound and the echo will have almost the same pitch. The result is a "doubling" effect, much like the tape-delay doubling commonly used when recording vocals. Since the voice is incapable of holding an absolute rock-steady pitch, the echo and the straight sound will always be a little out of tune with each other, giving the effect of two people singing.




Multiple echoes can create a still more complex effect. Let's consider the glissando again. If there are two echoes, then there will be three pitches heard: the direct sound, the first echo, and the second echo. If the number of echoes is increased still further, it soon becomes difficult to hear the resulting sound as a group of pitches. That's when it starts to become reverberation. In theory, reverberation is an infinite number of echoes. So, if you are playing a moving pitch (such as a glissando or a vibrato), you get back an infinite number of pitches. This is why even the smallest vibrato becomes immediately obvious in a reverberant environment.

A synthesizer is a good tool with which to learn about echo and reverberation, because it's a totally "dry" (no acoustical resonance) sound source. If you can get your hands on an echo machine (either tape-loop, or analog or digital delay) and a spring-type reverb (the kind in many guitar amps) try comparing the results of different vibratos, slurs, and other pitch modulations played through them. You will note that there is a great deal of difference between echo and reverb. However, if you turn up the "feedback" control on the echo machine so that you get multiple echoes, the echo and reverberation will become more similar.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TOM DARTER

# MUSIC THEORY SEMINAR

## Rhythm & Meter, Continued

AS WE HAVE SEEN IN THE LAST TWO columns, ties and beams have a number of important functions in our traditional system of rhythmic notation. Ties allow us to create note values (rhythmic durations) that are not possible using merely the basic set of note symbols and dots, and they also allow us to notate durations that last longer than one bar of music (and/or durations that extend over any particular bar line). Beams (in grouping together eighth-notes, sixteenth-notes, thirty-second-notes, and other relatively short durations) are obviously useful if we want to avoid visual clutter in rhythmic notation, and they also provide us with a simple way to underscore (visually) the standard groupings of notes implied by a given meter.

Using ties and beams, we can also notate syncopations in such a way that their relationship to a basic metric structure remains clear (visually and conceptually) throughout any complex pattern occurring within a beat or over a set of beats.

All of this makes it very easy for a player to orient himself or herself to the constant background structure provided by the meter. However, the value of keeping a clear outline of the meter in the notation of a rhythm extends far beyond that of keeping your place: The basic structure of a meter, although only implicit in the way most rhythms are constructed, will almost always make a difference in the way a particular rhythm is played (in traditional notated music). For instance, take the following rhythmic pattern:

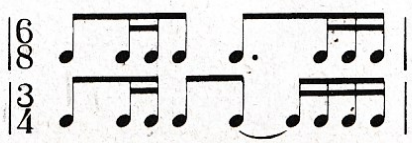
It is very easy to tap out this pattern. As it stands, you would probably tend to assume that it was in 6/8 time, because the pattern itself (in the abstract) seems to express the basic patterns of 6/8 very straightforwardly. The standard way to beam this pattern in 6/8 is as follows:

However, it would also be possible for this rhythmic pattern to exist in a bar of 3/4 meter. It would then be beamed as follows, so that the metric pattern would be easy to visualize:

This rhythmic pattern is fairly straightforward in both meters —there are no syncopations, no ties, and no unusual durations. Nevertheless, you will notice that there will be a subtle difference in the way you play the two examples (even though the rhythmic patterns are, in the abstract, the same), based on your implicit understanding of the metric structures of the two meters.

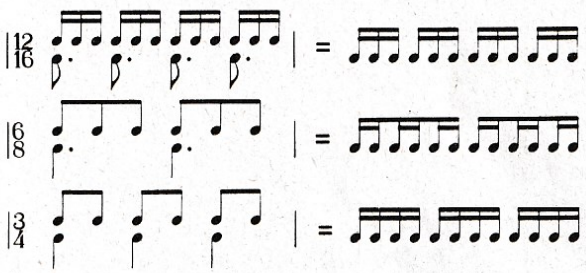
Here is another abstract rhythmic pattern:

And here is the same pattern, notated in 6/8 meter and in 3/4 meter:



You will notice that the dotted eighth-note has a completely different meaning in the two metric examples: In the 6/8 example it falls on the second beat of the duple meter, and therefore emphasizes (and reinforces) the implicit metrical accent; in the 3/4 example the dotted eighth-note works as a syncopation, cutting across the third beat of the triple meter and working contrary to the implicit accent pattern of the meter.

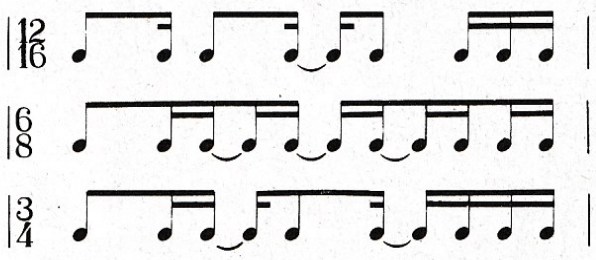
To give you one more example of the importance of metric structure as it relates to the feel of a particular rhythmic pattern, let's look at three different meters, all of which contain the same number of sixteenth-notes in one bar:



The first meter, 12/16, is a compound quadruple meter, and the proper grouping (or beaming) of sixteenth-notes would be in threes —they represent the basic subdivision of the beat. The second meter is 6/8, a compound duple meter; the sixteenth-notes are grouped (or beamed) in twos and/or sixes—in this case they represent a further subdivision of the basic subdivision of the beat. The third example is 3/4, a simple triple meter; in this case the sixteenth-notes would be grouped in fours, representing (once again) a subdivision of the basic subdivision of eighth-notes.

Now, here is an abstract rhythmic pattern that has a total duration of 12 sixteenth-notes:

Once again, this is an easy pattern to tap out, and if presented in the abstract like this it should probably be tapped out (played) without any implicit accents at all. Here is the same rhythmic example as it would be notated in the three meters that were shown above:



Establish the structure of each meter in your mind and play through each example (either tapping on a table top or playing one note on your guitar). You will see that, although the relative durations are the same across all three examples, the relationship of the rhythmic pattern to the implicit structure of the meter is different in each case —there will be a subtle difference in the feel of the rhythm (as played and as heard) in each meter. You will also notice that in each case the rhythm is notated so that the structure of the meter remains visually clear.

# CRAIG ANDERTON
# ELECTRONIC GUITAR
## Pedal Flanger, Part III

LAST MONTH WE PRESENTED the delay and audio sections for a good sounding, but simple-to-build, flanger. This month, we'll finish our discussion.

**Clock circuitry.** If the function of the clock is not clear, refer back to part I of this series, which appeared in the February '80 issue of *GP*. Fig. 1 shows the basic clock, based on a CMOS part called the CD4047. Points A and B connect to points A and B on last month's schematic; these wires should be as *short and direct as possible*. Points C and D can connect to one of the two auxiliary circuits shown in Figs. 2 and 3. Fig. 2 allows you to vary the flanging effect with a single pot; this is the best circuit to use when the pot can be mounted close to the board (say, within 5"). However, this option is most useful in studio and PA applications since it does not allow for easy footpedal control.

For footpedal or remote control applications, Fig. 3 represents a better option. The CD-4007 acts like a voltage-controlled resistor, with the voltage fed into pin 10 varying the flanging effect. Although the 4007 should be mounted close to the 4047, the pot may be mounted remotely from the rest of the 4007 circuit without degrading the circuit's performance. Some component juggling might be necessary for optimum performance; if the flanger effect doesn't go high enough in frequency, lower the value of the 27k resistor. If the flanging effect doesn't go low enough, lower the value of the 47K resistor. Since these two parts interact, if you change one you may have to change the other. But in most cases, these resistors will not have to be changed.

**Power supply.** For best results, the power for the flanger should come from a well-regulated, ±15 volt DC bipolar supply. Suitable kits are available from Bill Godbout Electronics [Bldg. 725, Oakland Airport, CA 94614] and from PAIA Electronics [1020 W. Wilshire Blvd., Oklahoma City, OK 73116 (stock #4771)]. Also, Bernie Hutchins has published several suitable designs for do-it-yourselfers in *Electronotes* [1 Pheasant Lane, Ithaca, NY 14850].

**Construction tips.** Here are several tips, in no particular order:

1. The 47pF capacitor in the clock circuit (Fig. 1) should be a stable polystyrene type for minimum flanging variations with changes in temperature.

2. The clock circuitry creates very high-amplitude, high-frequency signals. They can be picked up by sensitive electronic circuits (such as preamps and fuzztones), and could possibly cause problems by coupling into these stages, or into the preamp or mixer stages of the flanger. Therefore, use shielded cable to connect J1 to the input of the flanger, and also run shielded cable between S2 and pin 14 of IC1. Actually, your best approach is to carefully consider the circuit board layout before you start wiring: The clock circuitry should be mounted as close as possible to the delay line, but away from the audio stages based around IC1 as well as the various switches and controls.

While the layout isn't critical, any extra care spent in layout will pay off dividends in improved performance. Avoid long power and ground lines; use a single-point grounding system as much as possible; and keep all audio lines as short as possible. If you are powering other modules along with the flanger, connect a 10uF to 100uF capacitor (at 15 working volts DC) across the power supply lines connecting to the 4047 (the plus end of the capacitor connects to pin 14, while the minus end connects to pin 7). Again, this may not be necessary—but it certainly can't hurt.

3. IC handling: The clock ICs and delay-line IC may be destroyed by improper handling due to their sensitivity to static electricity charges. For best results, and so you don't have to kiss an $11 chip goodbye, *use sockets for these ICs* and keep them in their protective foam until just before it's time to test the circuit. Then, touch something grounded or metallic (to drain off any residual charge which you may have accumulated, say, by walking across a rug on a dry winter day) and pop the ICs into their sockets.

**Calibration.** Begin by opening S2 (vibrato position). This will allow you to hear only the delay section, thus simplifying calibration. Turn R4 up all the way; then turn R5, R6, and R26 down all the way. S1 can be in either position, and the 100k control used for the clock should be at the approximate halfway point.

Next, plug your instrument into J1, hook up J2 to your amp, turn on the power supply, and turn up R6 halfway. Play some loud chords with R26 turned up just a little bit; you may or may not hear anything. Now rotate R7 until you get the least distorted sound out of the flanger. Increase R26 until you get *just* distortion, then readjust R7 for the least distorted sound. Continue increasing R26 and readjusting R7 until you cannot get a clean sound anymore; then back off a bit on R26 until the sound cleans up. This is the optimum setting for R26. If you encounter distortion when playing, make sure R7 is properly calibrated; if it is, turn down R26 a bit further. If you have a scope, connect its probe to the midpoint of R2 and adjust this trimpot for the cleanest (least fuzzy) looking waveform. Otherwise, leave R2 at the halfway point.

**Using the flanger.** Close S2, turn up R4 all the way, adjust R6 to suit, and vary the 100k clock control: You should now hear that familiar flanging sound. Next, increase R5 until it's just short of the oscillation (squealing) point; this should dramatically increase the intensity of the flanging. Be forewarned—when the flanger goes into oscillation from turning R5 up too high, it can get *loud*; so keep your amp volume down a bit lower than normal as you experiment with different settings of R5. Change S1 to its other position; again, experiment with the setting of R5. In the (+) position of S1, the flanging sound is sharp and metallic, while the (–) position gives a more tubular and round sound.

**Modifications:**

1. If you want more output level, double the value of R15 and halve the value of C2.

2. If you want to use the flanger with line-level signals, change R26 to 100k (preferred method) or increase R23 to 470K (this is easier, but also contributes a little more noise).

3. To experiment with slapback echo effects, change C3 and C4 to .01uF Mylar capacitors and change the 47pF clock timing capacitor to 220pF. Don't expect any wonders in terms of performance, but you might enjoy using the flanger in this manner for some applications.

**Final comments.** In order to avoid taking up another installment of the column, I've tried to be as concise as possible. I hope this doesn't scare off too many builders; I have a lot of confidence in this design, am extremely happy with the way it sounds, and would like to make sure that anybody who wants to build it has enough information to do so. If there's anything you don't understand about this project, feel free to write me c/o *GP*, and we'll cover your queries in the next questions-oriented column. ■

*Fig. 1.*

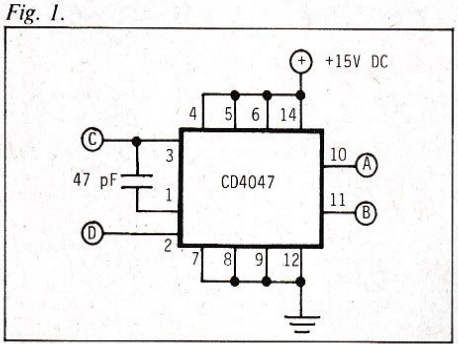



*Fig. 2.*

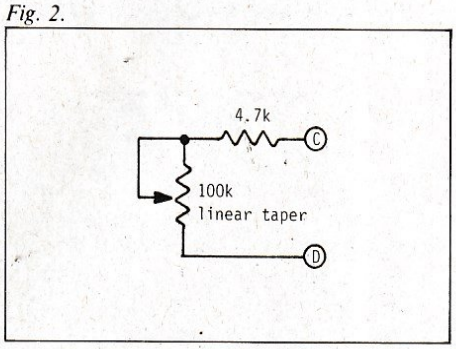
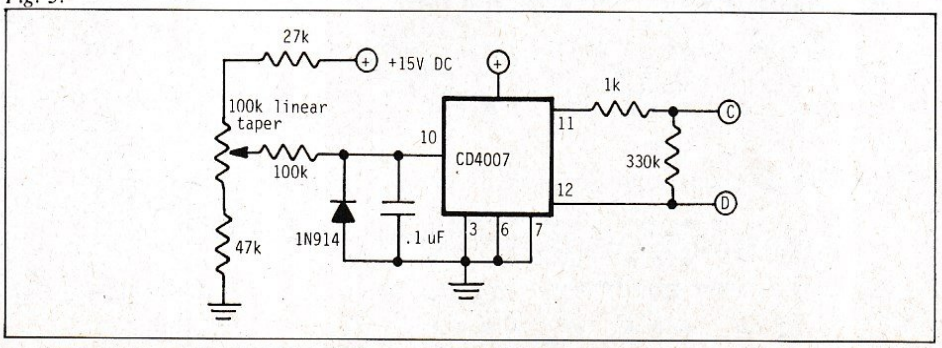



*Fig. 3.*



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ARNIE BERLE

# FRETBOARD BASICS

## Alternative Major Scale Fingerings

BACK IN NOVEMBER 1979 I BEGAN a series of columns based on six different fingerings for the major scale. Each was given a number designation; starting with the first fingering, Form 1, I proceeded to show you Forms 2, 3, and 4, and in last month's column I introduced 5 and 6. Actually, there are many great jazz players who use only three or four different scale fingerings. Still, the advantage in knowing several ways to finger a scale is that you can play in any key, anywhere on the fingerboard.

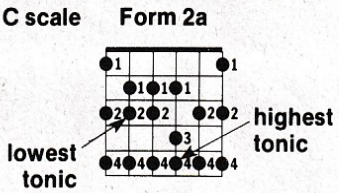
At this point, if you've studied the columns (and the exercises based on each one), you should be able to play any major scale at six different locations. For example, the *C* major scale is played at several different places depending on which form you choose:

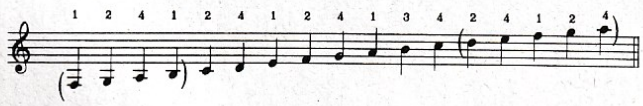
Form 1: sixth string, 8th fret, 2nd finger
Form 2: fifth string, 3rd fret, 2nd finger
Form 3: sixth string, 8th fret, 4th finger
Form 4: fifth string, 15th fret, 4th finger
Form 5: sixth string, 8th fret, 1st finger
Form 6: fifth string, 3rd fret, 1st finger

To sum up the series, you should be able to play the *C,* or any other major scale starting from either the sixth or fifth string, and beginning with either the 1st, 2nd, or 4th finger. Obviously, some forms are not always practical on *all* guitars because of the variations in fingerboard lengths and the different types of instruments (solid-body, acoustic, cutaway, etc.).

Now I want to say a few things about the fingerings that I've included in these columns. If you have been playing guitar for any length of time, chances are you're using some of these fingerings already. If you don't do them exactly as I do, then you are probably playing something similar (with slight alterations).

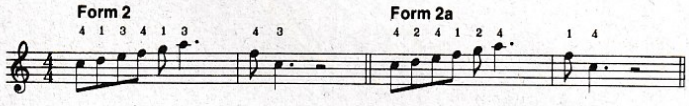
The point I'm trying to make is that there are alternate fingerings for some of my scale forms. The only constant scale form is Form 1, which begins with the 2nd finger on the sixth string; almost all guitarists agree on that fingering. However, for the Form 2 (2nd finger, fifth string), there is an alternate fingering shown in the following example. We'll call it Form 2A:



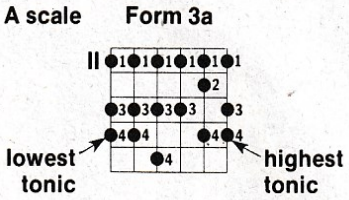



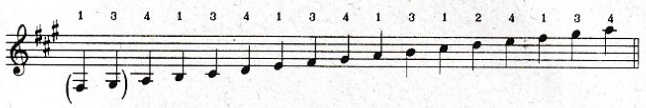
Notice that both the fingering diagram and the notated music show notes occurring above and below the tonic.

As to the advantages of one form over another, here are two examples of the same passage showing Form 2 and 2A fingerings. Try them and decide for yourself which is better.

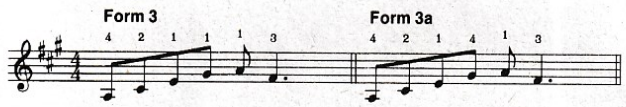



Another alternate fingering may be used for Form 3. We'll call it Form 3A:



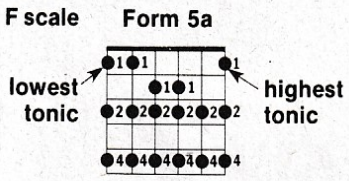



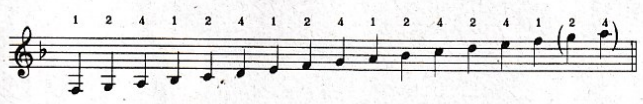
Whether to use 3 or 3A depends on the sequence of notes. Play the following passage, and you'll see that in this case there is an advantage to 3A.




In the above passage, using the 1st finger for three consecutive notes—especially at a fast tempo—can be rather awkward. So, 3A would be the better choice.

An alternate fingering may also be employed for Form 5. Form 5A looks like this:

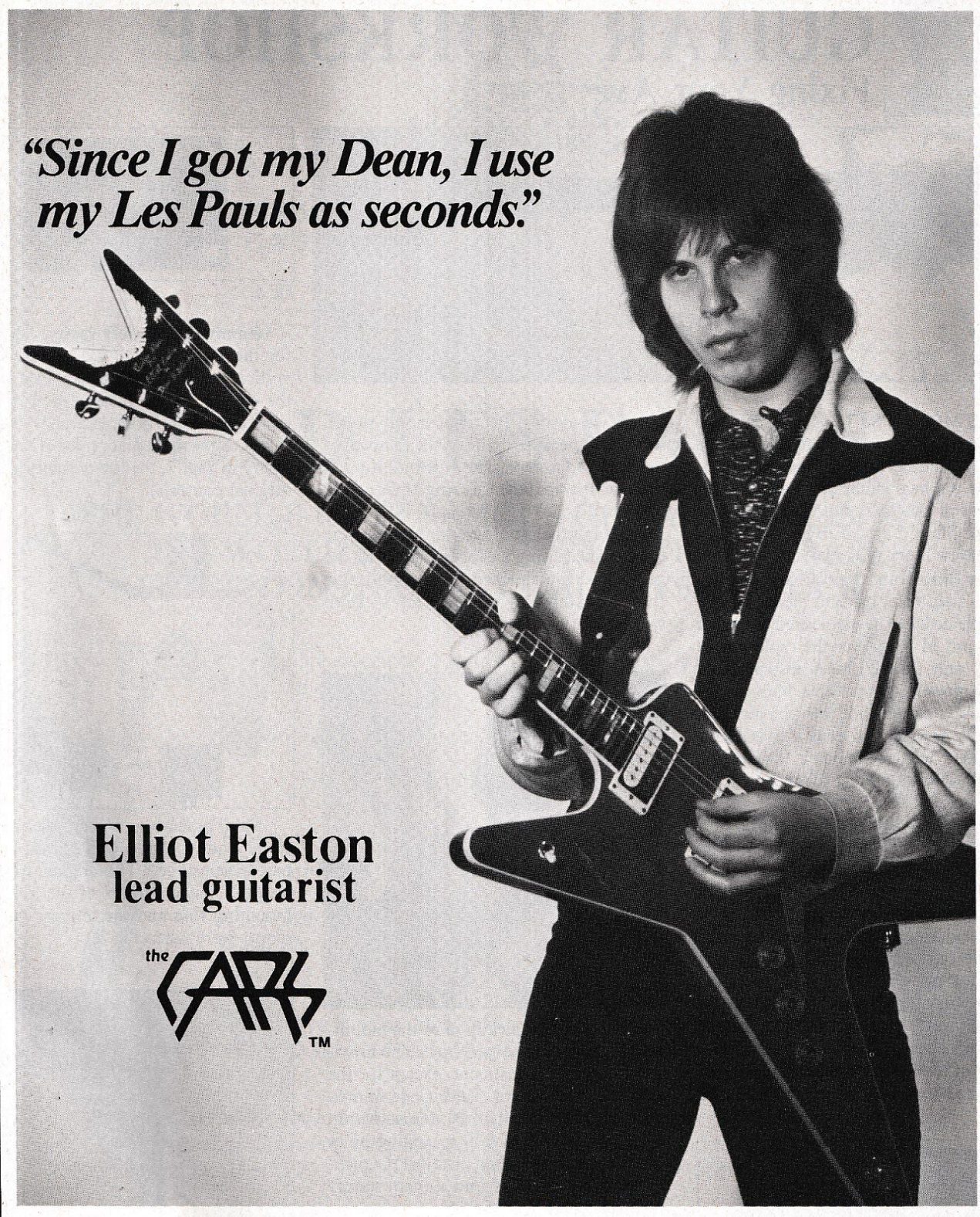


The advantage to Form 5 is that it eliminates the wide stretches on the first string; it also avoids the stretch from the 4th finger on the second string to the 1st finger on the first string, and it increases the scale's effective range by one more note. The one advantage to 5A, though, is that the notes are more directly related to the *F* chord, such as the *F* bar chord, *Fmaj7, F7,* etc.

There you have them: the six regular major scale fingerings, plus the alternates (Form 2A, 3A, and 5A). All are commonly interchanged by many players, and all are technically correct. The choice is yours.

Next month we'll see how to connect some of these forms in order to play all over the fingerboard. Till then, "straight ahead."

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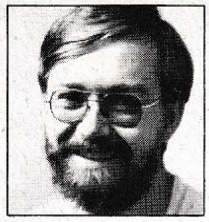


# JOHN CARRUTHERS
# GUITAR WORKSHOP
## Fixing Your Axe

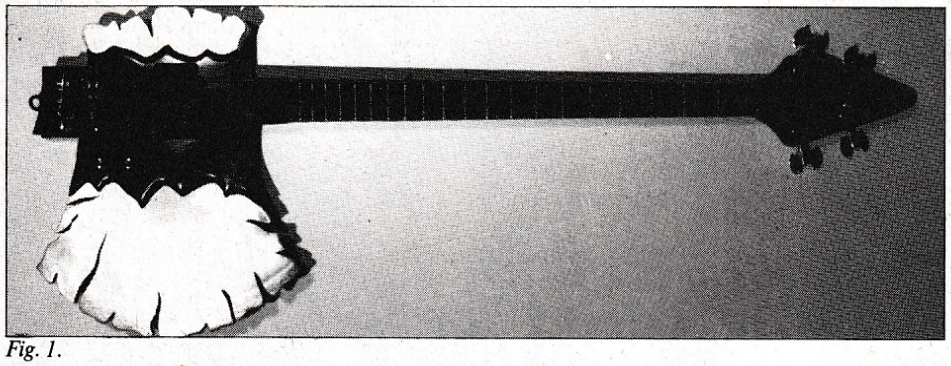


*Fig. 1.*

THIS MONTH'S COLUMN deals with converting a guitar from one type of pickup to another of a different size. The example is a bass guitar belonging to Gene Simmons of Kiss [*GP*, Jan. '79], which was built by Steve Carr of Holbrook, Long Island, New York (Fig. 1).

Tom Harper and Paul Chavarria, two of Kiss's road men, brought the bass to me and explained that Gene desired a smaller pickup put in. However the replacement was not only smaller, but it also required a 9-volt power source (for a hum-canceling/boost preamp built into the pickup). So it was necessary to rout a hole in the bass's body to accommodate the battery. The method of mounting the pickup is explained below.

**Converting the old face plate to a mounting ring.** One solution to the pickup size problem would be to make a new mounting ring. I chose instead to convert the existing pickup face plate (made of anodized aluminum) into a mounting ring.

After removing the old pickup and taking out its polepieces, I pried loose the face plate from the pickup. The area to be removed was then marked out on the plate's top surface (Fig. 2), and after drilling a pilot hole I used a nibbler to cut out the marked area (Fig. 3). (A nibbler can be purchased at most electrical supply shops; it is useful because it allows the removal of material from an inside area and doesn't deform the material during the cutting process.)

*Fig. 2.*

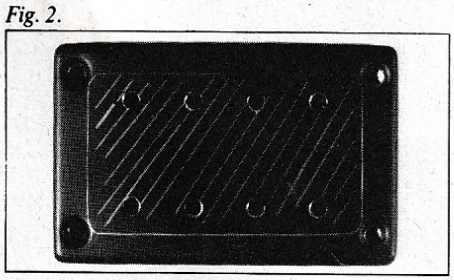
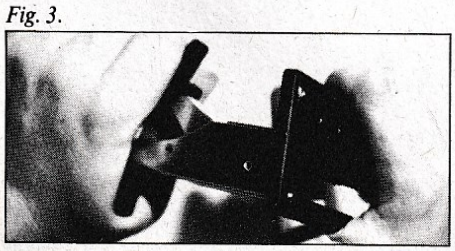
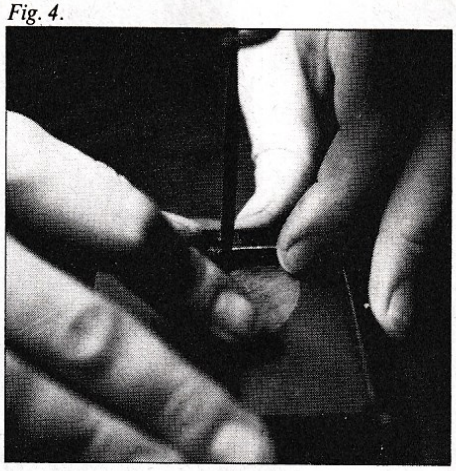


*Fig. 3.*



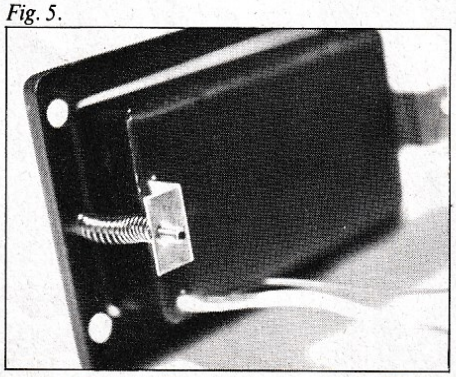
The internal contours and edges were fine-finished using a file. Fig. 4 shows the half-round file chucked into a scroll saw; this is faster and more efficient than working by hand.

*Fig. 4.*



**Mounting the pickup onto the mounting ring.** The original pickup had no provision for height adjustment, except for the polepieces themselves. Since Gene wanted the replacement unit to be adjustable up and down, I had to drill mounting holes into the new ring. I then installed the pickup with 3-48 screws and appropriately sized springs (Figs. 5 and 6).

*Fig. 5.*



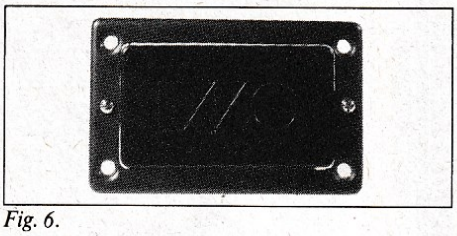
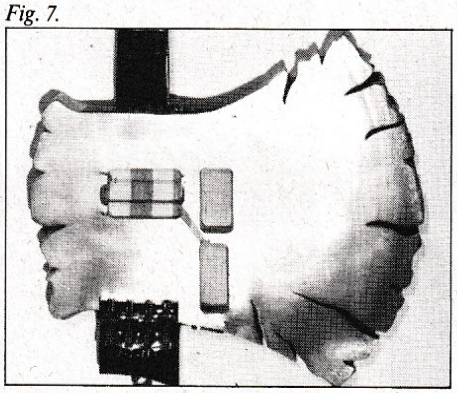


*Fig. 6.*

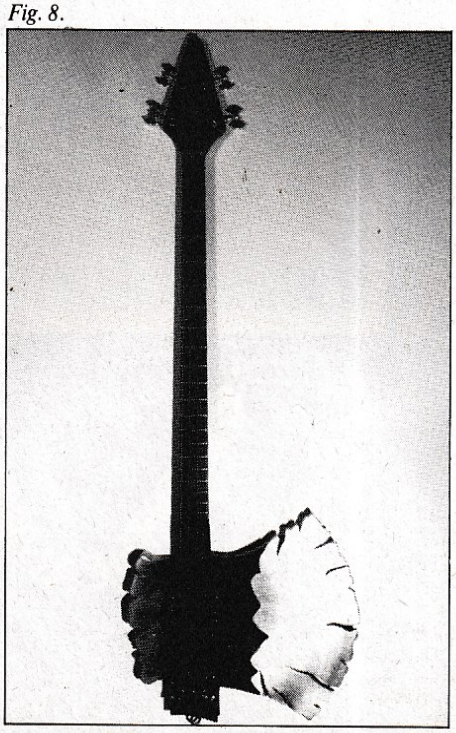
**Routing the battery cavity.** The cavity for the 9-volt battery was routed using a vertical milling machine. I placed it under the surface of the pickguard, but kept it easily accessible for replacement (the upper cavity to the immediate right of the pickup cavity in Fig. 7; the lower cavity is for the original controls).

*Fig. 7.*



**Final assembly.** the control network (tone and volume) was wired, and the pickup reinstalled. The original four holes on the outside corners of the face plate/mounting ring and the original mounting screws were used (Fig. 8). ■

*Fig. 8.*



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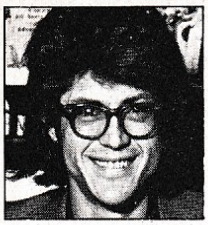


## LARRY CORYELL

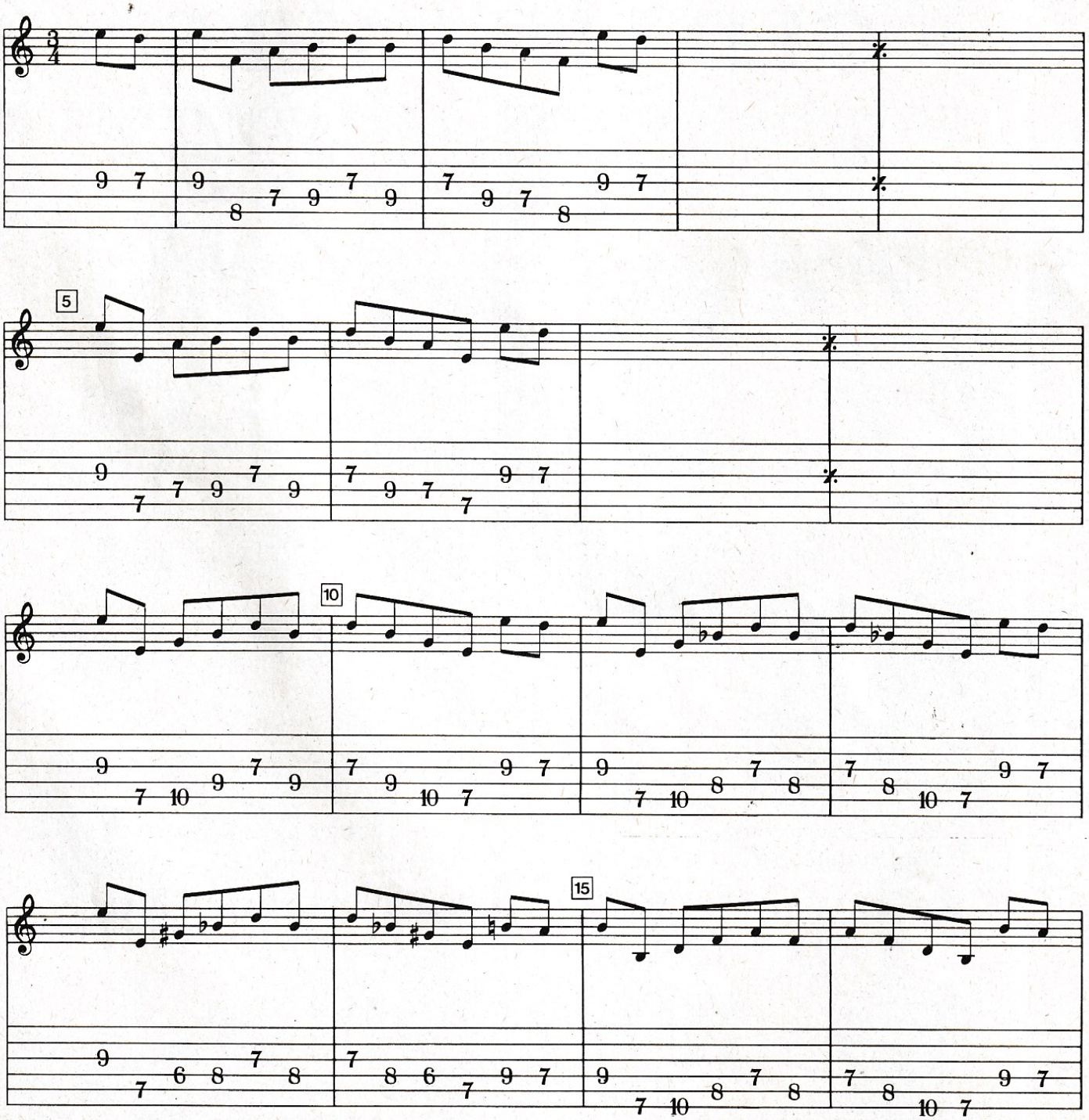
# CONTEMPORARY GUITAR

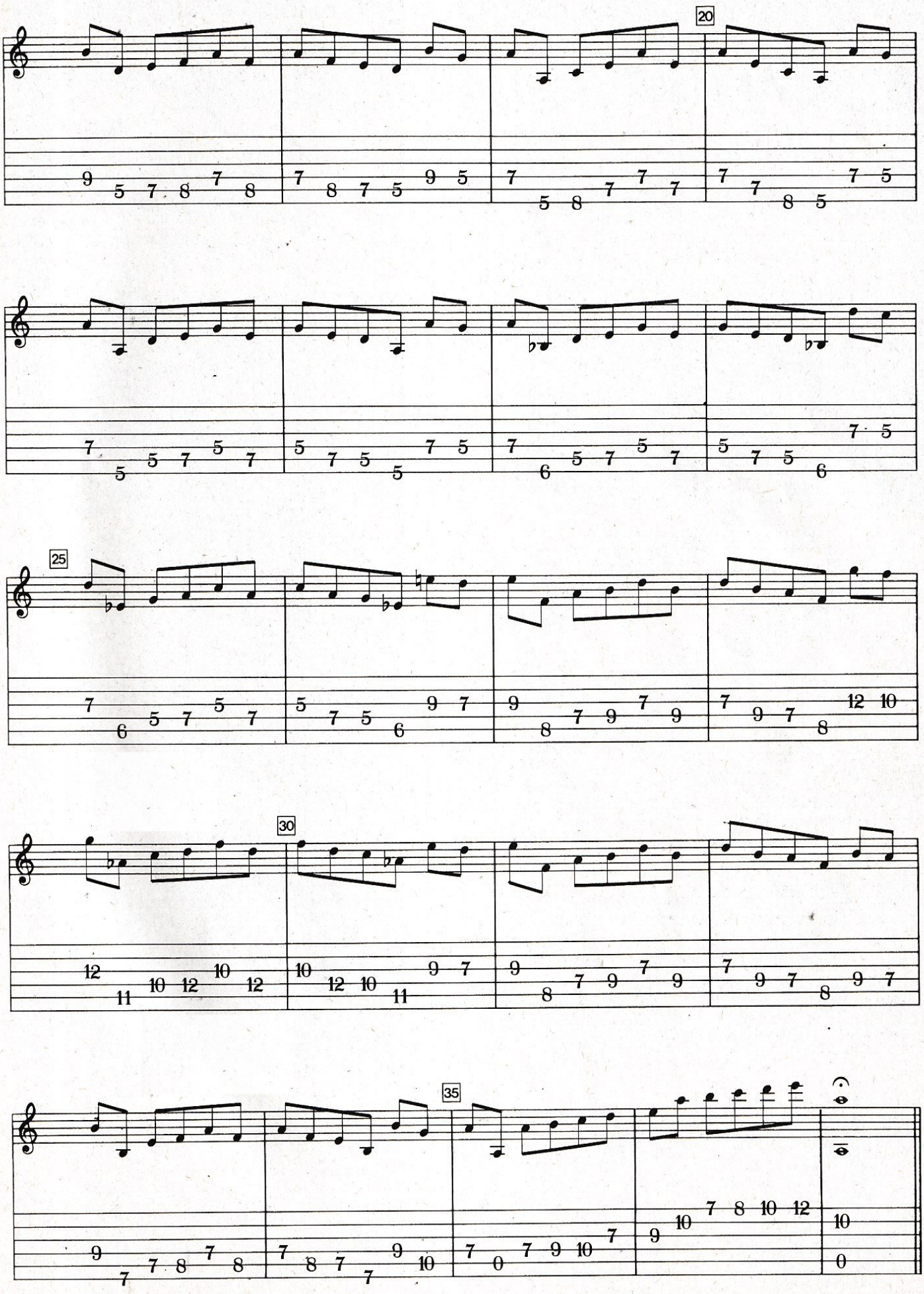
## Using The Locrian Mode

THE LOCRIAN MODE IS MOST EASILY VIEWED on the piano, where in the key of *B* it covers all the white keys from *B* to *B*. To me, this mode is the touchstone of the half-diminished chord, often called the minor 7♭5th. Another way to look at this chord/mode concept is to envision a minor triad with the 6th of its scale as the bass note. In other words, when extended, a *Dm* triad has as its 6th a *B* note, so we will place that in the bass. The result is a *Bm7b5th*, or *B* half-diminished.

Usually (but not always), a *Bm7b5th* leads to an *E7(b9)*, and then to *Am*. Keeping this in mind, I fashioned the following exercise to spell out the color of the *B* locrian mode, and to show the inclination of the half-diminished chord to resolve into *Am*.

The basic motif, a phrase in two measures, can either by repeated or slightly varied as it works itself through to its resolution. The tablature in measures 17 and 18 is not the *only* way to get down to the *Am* outlined in bar 19; it's just a suggested way. Experiment, and try to find other ways to arrive there. Notice that the opening *B* locrian phrase has been transposed to *E* locrian in measures 23 and 24, *A* locrian in measures 25 and 26, and *D* locrian in measures 29 and 30. The entire piece has a lot of repetitions, so feel free to throw in your own variations and/or outright changes once you get the basic exercise down pat. Good luck.

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# STEFAN GROSSMAN
# ACOUSTIC SET
## Duck Baker: Arranging Irish Melodies

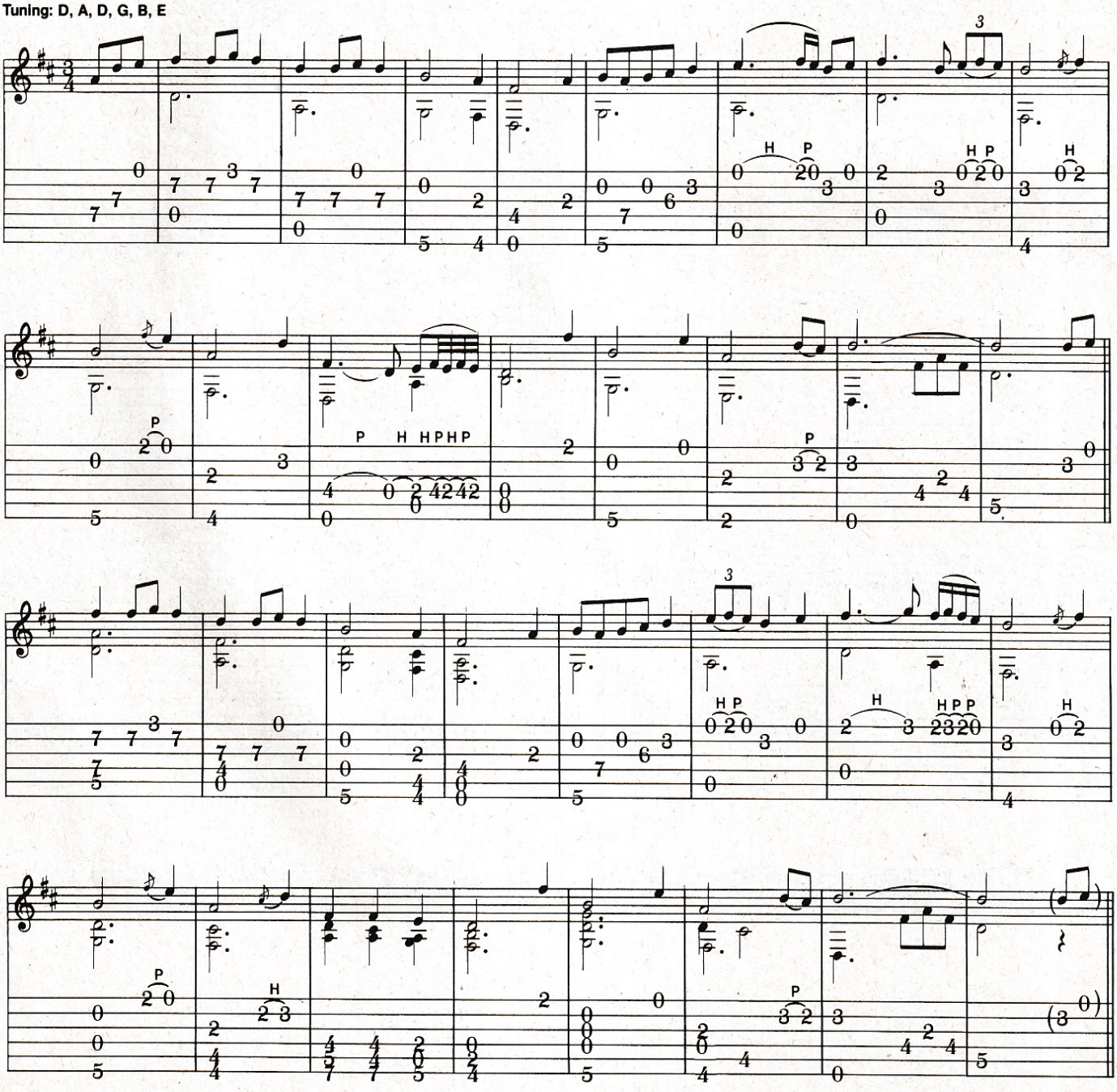
DUCK BAKER HAS ARRANGED quite a few Irish melodies in his years as a guitar player. Some of his best arrangements are those of the composer Turlogh O'Carolan [1670-1738], who originally played the harp. (You may recall that John Renbourn also arranged an O'Carolan tune, "Lord Inchiquin," which I featured in my December '79 column.)

"Sheebeg And Sheemore" is one of O'Carolan's most popular melodies, and Duck's approach to it is quite intriguing. He attempted to reproduce the feel of an Irish harp, and I think he has succeeded. The song is played in dropped *D* (*D, A, D, G, B, E,* low to high), and I've included the first 32 bars of the piece. (For another interpretation, give a listen to David Bromberg's version on his LP *My Own House* [Fantasy, F-9572]; or see my column on Happy Traum's arrangement in the August '78 *GP.*)

## "Sheebeg And Sheemore"

**By Turlogh O'Carolan** **Arr. by Duck Baker**

**Tuning: D, A, D, G, B, E**



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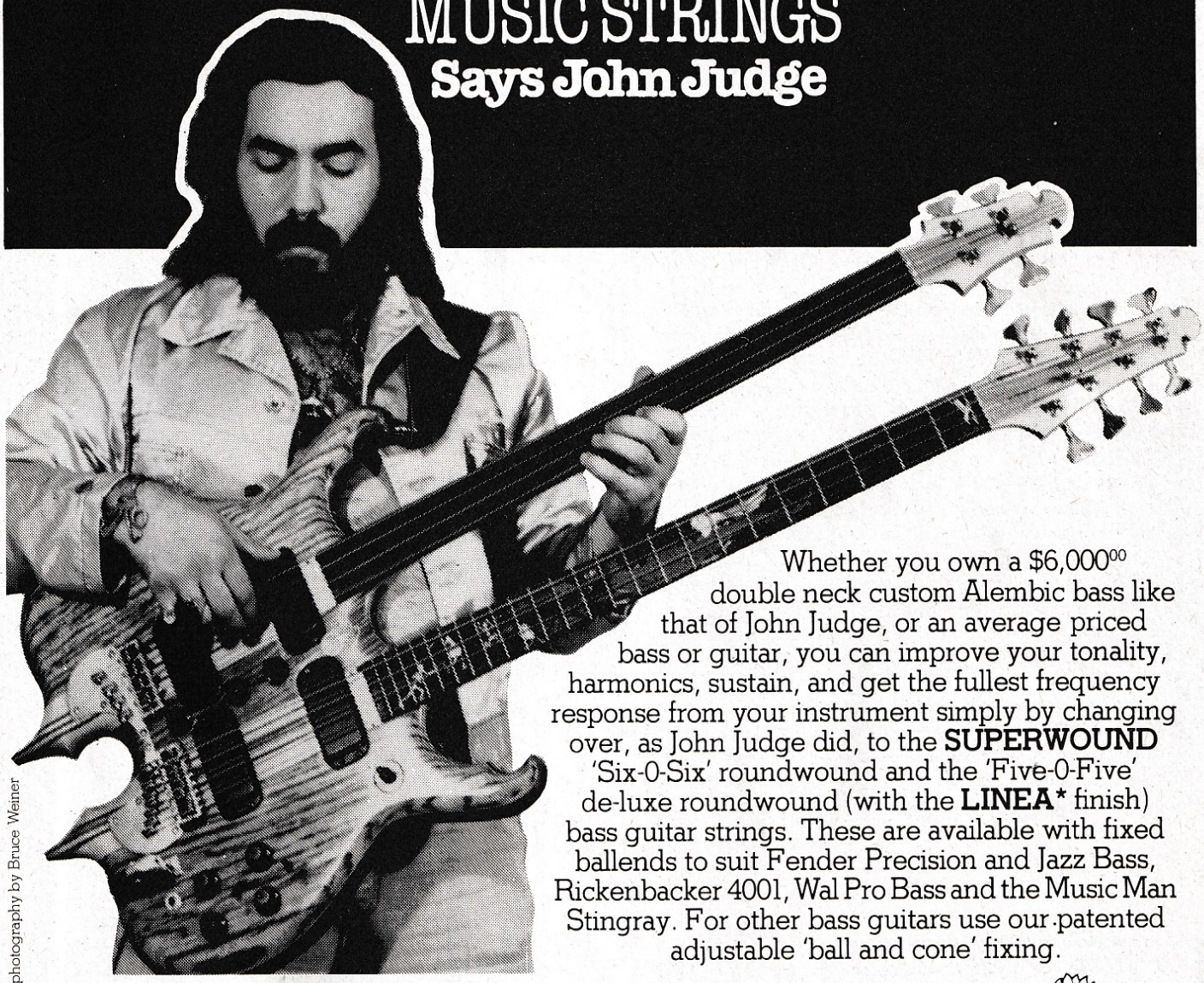

photography by Bruce Weiner

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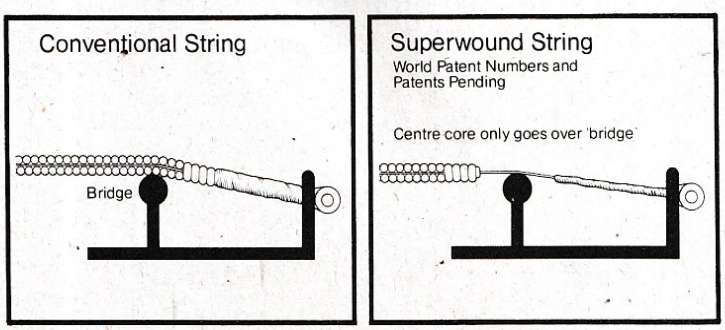


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# JIMMY STEWART
# GUITAR NOTEBOOK
## Rock Guitar: Conclusion

THE TRIBUTES IN this series have dealt mainly with the imitators of traditional blues and R&B. Rock guitar can be traced back to the rhythm and blues music that found its origins in Chicago during the late '40s. The reason for its emergence in that particular city was that job opportunities there attracted many black people from the southern states, and they brought with them their rich heritage of traditional blues. Some of the licks that developed in rock guitar are direct descendants of those that were passed on to R&B through the evolution of the Mississippi Delta blues style. They were originally acoustic guitar fills—licks appearing in choruses after each line of prose. Some of them were played with a bottleneck, some with fingerpicking, and others with a flatpick.

During the late '40s and early '50s there were only a few blues and R&B radio stations around the country. It became the "in" thing with the youth of America to listen to offbeat blues records that featured the guitar either as accompaniment or as a solo instrument after the vocal chorus. The music became popular for a few reasons. It could be danced to in a freestyle fashion; this contrasted to the ballroom style of dancing that prevailed at the time. Also, American jazz had evolved to a point of over-complexity with the new wave of soloists such as saxophonist Charlie Parker and trumpeter Miles Davis. The American youth wanted to express its break with the past, and the raw, emotional songs featuring the guitar filled this need. This raw music was frowned upon by music educators and the followers of classical music and jazz.

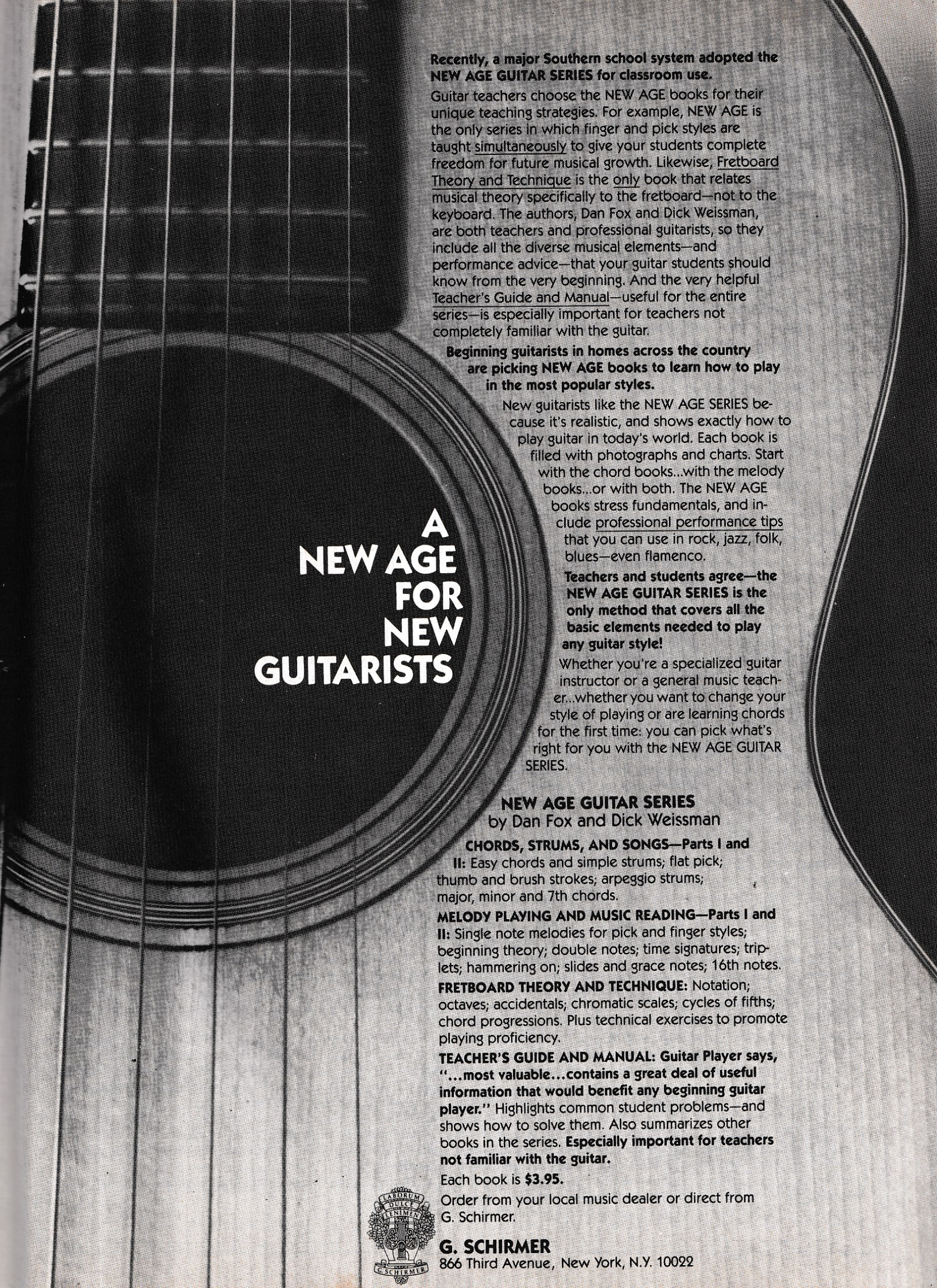
The recordings of early R&B were so quickly put together that many times the guitar and piano were out of tune with each other, the singer sang with more feel than intonation, and the music was seldom written down. This may well have been advantageous to the beginnings of rock guitar. The only way to learn to play rock guitar during this period was to get hold of an album or single by an R&B artist and copy the vocal and guitar licks in detail, note-for-note, even emulating the feeling of the performers.

As rock guitar began to develop, many of the records were remakes of the black R&B and traditional blues tunes. Many of the original R&B artists were never compensated financially, although their names became household words in a lot of cases through their reintroduction via the imitators. Did you know that the name "Rolling Stone" was taken from a song written by Muddy Waters [*GP*, Mar. '70]? Did you know that Chuck Berry [Feb. '71] has had his original songs successfully recorded by the Beatles, the Beach Boys, Linda Ronstadt, and hundreds of other artists, or that the word "rock"—slang for sex—was taken from the jargon used on black radio stations in the '40s and from various records—"Good Rockin' Tonight," "Rock All Night," and "We're Gonna Rock"? These reflected the changing social values of the younger generation, finally burying some of the Victorian ethics that had been passed on from Europe.

In 1948 the Columbia Recording Company introduced the 33⅓ rpm long-playing phonograph record, and RCA developed the 7" 45 rpm record. All records up to that time had been the fragile 78 rpm shellac discs. The R&B recordings made during this period were not easy to come by, although certain record stores would devote a section to this idiom. The companies started to promote these new innovations, making records more readily available to young buyers. Portable record players were now a practical device on which to play these new discs.

These were the years when millions of post-War babies were reaching their pre-teens. This youth cult, feeling the pressures of things ranging from parental authority to fears of nuclear annihilation, became restless and rebellious. Economics were no problem; the pre-teenagers and teenagers had money for buying records and other luxuries, a situation that no other youthful generation had experienced in the recent past. As TV and radio started to influence people's lives more and more with visual and sound images, R&B musicians found themselves in a peculiar situation. When they were only heard on records, the listener had only a vague image of what the artist looked like. Once the older bluesmen were seen on the TV screen, the young audiences were less able to identify with them. However, when Elvis Presley hit the scene with his black gospel sound, overt sexuality, and his own *Rebel Without A Cause* looks, the younger generation instantly related to his visual impact.

This conclusion to my column series would not be complete without again emphasizing that part of the tribute to rock guitar must be given to the blues and R&B artists who were the forerunners of the style. Their musical honesty came out of the need to express in a spontaneous way the inside story of growing up black in the United States. Here is a list of some of them: Lonnie Johnson [*GP*, Oct. '78], T-Bone Walker [Mar. '77], Bo Diddley [Feb. '74], John Lee Hooker [Feb. '72], Muddy Waters [Mar. '70], Elmore James, Sonny Boy Williamson, Howlin' Wolf, Lowell Fulson [Nov. '76], Memphis Slim, Blind Blake, Sam Butler, William Moore, Carl Martin, Tampa Red, Billy Bird, B.B. King [Mar. '75], Jim Jackson, Otis Rush [Feb. '76], Earl Hooker [Mar. '75], Guitar Slim, and Blind Lemon Jefferson. ■



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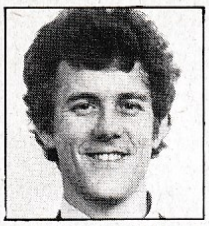


# MICHAEL LORIMER
# MASTER CLASS
## A Checklist For Polishing Your Playing

PREPARING AND PERFORMING a recital adds an extra dose of reality to practice, and if you're studying guitar in a conservatory or at a university, it's likely you will be putting the finishing touches on a recital program and then performing it during the next three months. Right now you've probably planned your program, and you've got most or all of the pieces well into your fingers, if not memorized. It's time to bring all your planning and work together. That recital date, which a while ago seemed far off in the distance, is now thundering towards you and there is more than the usual urgency to the question, "How can I make the best use of my practice time?"

Knowing *what* you're practicing for and having tasks you want to accomplish is central to making good use of your time. When you play, you should have an inner picture of the way you'd like the music to sound. There is also an outer picture, which is the way your playing *actually* sounds. Clarifying your inner picture and going from generalities such as "I want it to be exciting" to specifics such as "I want the rhythms to be crisp" leads directly to your finding ways of making your playing the way you want it to be. This assumes one other image is clear — your hearing inside of what you're producing outside. Instead of being a clear window through which you see what is going on outside, this image is all too often like a window covered with fingerprints, dirt, and paint — it has a reality all its own. Then, the way you *think* you sound is different than the way you actually sound. To clean this window — as well as to make vivid your picture of the way you'd like the music to sound — one good tool is a tape recorder.

To see what shape your recital is in, perform your program as if you were playing a real concert, and record it. Then listen to your tape, making notes of what needs work. Go over it with a fine-toothed comb. If you are tempted to pass over any seemingly small mistakes, observe — but don't heed — the inner voice that says things like, "I'll get that next time," or, "I usually don't make that mistake," or, "That detail is so subtle no one will notice it; it's not worth the time to correct it." At the same time, have good priorities and work first on issues that will make or break the concert. Here are some points to listen for.

**The forest.** In reviewing their own work, players often give first priority to the means — technique — and a second priority to the end — feeling. But average audience members are completely unaware of technique; the feeling of the program is their total experience. So, for the moment, put yourself in the position of an audience member. How do you like the overall feeling of the program? Does the first piece grab your attention? Do the pieces that follow hold your attention?

If the impact of your tape is less than what you desire, see whether the problem is in the program itself or the performance. The impact of a good program performed with flaws will be far greater than that of a poor program performed flawlessly. In a good program there will be a balance of continuity and variety, and each piece will contribute to the next. The whole will be greater than the sum of individual parts. Even at this late date, you may do well to change something if the sequence is not right.

If the program is fine, try to pinpoint what it is about the feeling of the performance that could be enhanced. Don't jump right to the technicalities — "I missed these notes, and that passage is sloppy" — or you may miss the forest by focusing on the trees. Are you telling stories and painting pictures with your music, are you saying something, or are there spaces where you are just playing notes? What is the character you're trying to project with each piece? Is there some way you can heighten your expression, deepen the mood of your music, or make more dramatic the stories you're telling?

Very few players need to apologize for exaggerating expression. What may be clear to you because you've heard the piece a hundred times is not necessarily going to be clear to the listener who may be hearing the music for the first time. So hit them over the head with what you want! Don't worry about being obvious. Before examining any technicalities of your performance, give careful consideration to what you're trying to do and say. If you're clear about *what for*, answers to the *how to* (techniques) will come jumping at you. Don't ask how to until you're clear about what for.

**The trees.** If feeling, spirit, and expression are the forest, then the big trees are rhythm (with its offshoot legato, or smoothness), pacing (and its offshoots tempo and phrasing), and projection (with its offshoot tone quality). Take one piece that you especially want to enliven and answer these questions: What is the feeling, mood, and character of this piece? What story does it tell? What picture does it make? To enhance this, what can I do with the rhythm, the legato, the pacing, the phrasing, the projection, and the tone quality? Then get your fingers to produce the results you want and go on to work on each piece in a similar way. If you're short on time, you may shy away from using your head so much when you know the problems are in your fingers. The reality of it is that being short on time, you can't afford *not* to use your head. If you practice without thinking, you'll be like the speeding driver who says, "I have no idea where I'm going, but I'm sure getting there fast!"

**Checklist.** If you reach a plateau, here are some further points to listen for:

1. Is your rhythm smooth? Does it have the swing you want? Are there places where you're late or change tempo because of difficult left-hand shifts? Are your slurs in time? Many players tend to rush the first note of a slur, especially at fast tempos.

2. Are your melodies legato? Are the notes linked as if you were playing them on a bowed instrument or singing them? Are there places where you're late because you're trying to play legato? Remember that smooth rhythm is much more important for legato than holding notes as long as possible.

3. Do you play any passages stacatto; if so, are these passages articulate? Stacatto sounds must be made as if they were legato and then suddenly damped. During the legato part, the tone is cleanly heard, and when it's suddenly damped, there's the effect of stacatto. If stacatto is done any other way on the guitar, it is weak sounding at best, and it's never articulate since so much of the sound is attack noise. On the guitar, a stacatto that is too quick is mostly noise without pitch.

4. Are your tempos as steady as you want them to be? Are you able to play each piece at tempo as well as at less than tempo, in *perfect* time with the metronome? If not, make friends with the metronome! If your piece has rubatos or syncopations, it is even more important than normal that you and the listener have a clear idea of where the beat is. Otherwise, the expressive quality of these devices is lost. Rubatos can be clearly articulated by subdividing the beat into the smallest common unit (in 4/4 time, for example, the unit would often be the sixteenth-note in slower tempos and the eighth-note at quicker tempos) and by evenly slowing or accelerating the small units rather than the overall beat to effect the rubato.

5. Are your phrases as long as they could be? Too often inexperienced players load their phrases with accents that spoil them by chopping them into little bits. The best players use accents with care, incisively but sparingly, so their phrases are simpler, longer, and far more expressive.

6. Are you playing loudly and as clearly as you can? Is there anything you can do to make the instrument better heard? Too often guitarists feather the strings and can hardly be heard. I've never met a classical guitarist who could be accused of playing too loudly, although I have met some who could be faulted on their tone quality. Loud is not the same as harsh! See how much of each of these qualities you can add to each piece: volume, cleanness of attack, clarity, and vibrato. Give vibrato special attention. It is one of the most beautiful and underused resources of our instrument.

I'll continue this checklist next month. Have fun, and good luck with your playing! ■

# FACHBLATT TEST

*Translated from and reprinted with permission from West Germany's leading music magazine.*

# MESA/BOOGIE Model Mark II


The name MESA/Boogie is well known to many guitarists and many have heavy dreams how to manage to get one because they are hard to get. Of course there are shops where you can order but in Germany it is sometimes another question if you really will get it.

Well I myself have got one after I had waited a half year from Applied Acoustics Bochum, and here that is an acceptable waiting time.

The amp is a Mark II, a further development of the Boogie Amp. The price including hardwood cabinet, flight case, shipping, duty and all other available options supercedes 5000 DM and that's really a lot for a musician. I have spent all my money on this amp but on the other hand I'm proud and happy to own it because this amp is fantastic and hard to describe in words. During my tests I have never before used the word "perfect" but now I am sure to know what it means.

This MESA/Boogie is an absolutely perfect lead amplifier and there's nothing else like it on the world's market. And this is not exaggerated. The Mark I which I played for a while, already had me convinced but the Mark II is even better. If this amp wasn't so heavy I would always have it with me.

Like the Mark I, the Mark II Boogie is an all tube type amplifier but with additional controls. This gives you more tone especially with the use of the overdrive channel.

My Boogie is a 60/100 watt version within a solid hardwood cabinet and with a 12" Altec loudspeaker. I prefer the 12" speaker to the 15" because it's not so boomy. But with the amp running in 100 watt position you need an additional speaker. The Altec is a good speaker but I don't think that it is capable of handling 100 watts of Boogie power which is indeed more than 100 watts of Marshall power. The available Boogie extension speaker cabinets are slightly smaller and perfectly matched to the combo cabinet. Under aesthetic aspects also, the hardwood Boogie supercedes all other amps. New too is the fan inside the 100 watt models which cools the tubes.

The Boogie's inside is done carefully by hand. Many electronic components are specially designed and unusual for musical instrument amplifiers and are of outstanding quality and carefully selected.

One more option is the 5-Band Graphic Equalizer which is good to further alter the tone. There are so many possibilities to vary the sound that you have to take some time to find the ones best for you. Again and again I am surprised by new tone settings. You can even get a good clear sound for playing an acoustic guitar through it, indeed you really get many, many sounds—for instance the old Fender sound which you can't get with the new Fender amps.

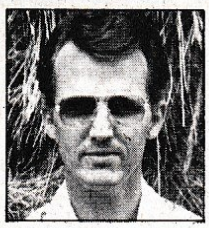
It's surprising to see some new amps sounding much better than the new Fender itself and all date back in some way to the old Leo Fender amps. By the way, the development of the MESA/Boogie company and their product is a very interesting story too, which I will tell you about in one of our next issues. I hope you will enjoy it.

But back to the Boogie amp. If 100 watts Boogie power is not enough, you can use the Slave Out to plug in additional power amps or to plug directly into P.A.

The Boogie is still handmade in the USA as it has always been and is not built on license in England or Japan as the story goes. There are still delivery times of several months and black market prices for getting it early, yet handmade perfection and individualism are rare and worth the price.

During the last Frankfurt Spring Music Fair I was anxious to look for alternatives to the Boogie amps and indeed there were several manufacturers showing very similar looking products but the sound and quality were terrible compared to the Boogie, so you'd better forget it.

To describe the Boogie's sound is difficult for me and for those of you who don't know, the most impressive thing is to listen to musicians using the Boogie such as Joe Walsh, Carlos Santana and Frank Zappa for instance. And all of them have a different but typical sound . . . and what else can I say?



## JEFF NEWMAN

# STEEL SYMPOSIUM

## Passing Chords, Part III

IN THE PAST TWO ISSUES I have been dealing with chords that pass, or step, from one chord to another. I have been using one certain type of change that is common to almost any tune you might run across; it moves up the neck five half-steps at a time. In plain English, this is the kind that entails going from, say, *C* to *F*, or *B* to *E* (or any change that goes "up five frets" on your guitar). Songs are filled with this kind of goings-on in the progressions. Once you can see where the tune is heading, you can pull out some of these neat little patterns and use them.

This month let's talk about the "down five frets" change. This is an *A* to *E*, *C* to *G*, or *E* to *B* type of movement. If the chords in the song *don't* move this way, then you'd better not insert the following substitutes, or you may find yourself moving to a new band. Be judicious; once you are familiar with these passing chords, determine if they'll sound good or just clog things up. Be sure you know what chords are coming up, and then try some of the ideas shown below.

I am going to use an *A* to *E* movement to illustrate some of the ways to plug in passing chords. The phrasing will, naturally, vary with the tempo and the way you feel about each tune. Also, the band shouldn't necessarily be playing the exact same chords that you are basing your solo on, because the passages usually go by very fast; it's not always practical for anyone else to use the same chords and motion you are. But I suppose if you have a speedy bass player, he could work out a bass line to accompany you through these progressions. ■

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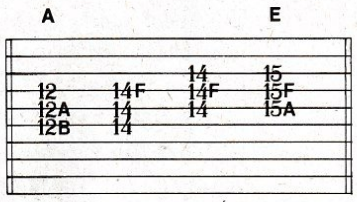


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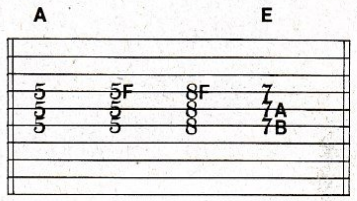


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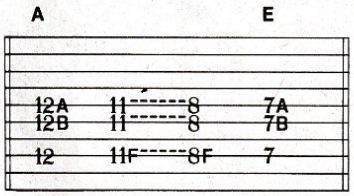


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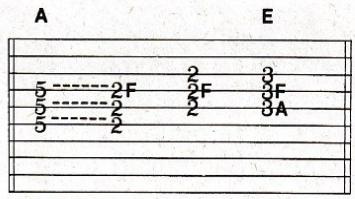


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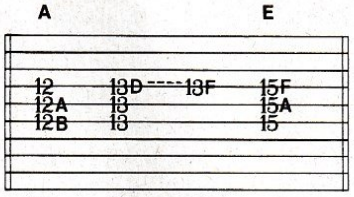


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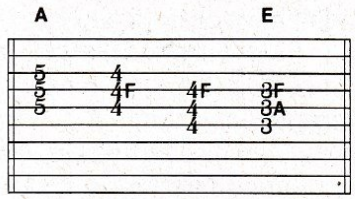


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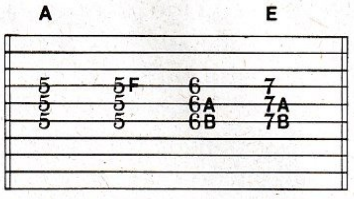


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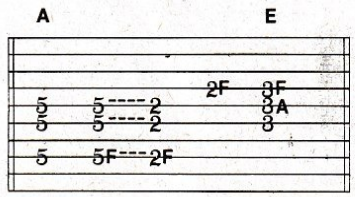

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# HOWARD ROBERTS
# JAZZ IMPROVISATION
## Freeing Yourself From Habitual Patterns

THIS MONTH WE EMBARK ON A NEW series that employs a view of learning guitar borrowed from medicine: State typical ailments, and prescribe cures. Nothing earth-shakingly new, so far. But the emphasis will be placed on the way to get from the ailment to the cure; that is, the *diagnosis*. In addition to learning how to treat the specific maladies we single out, you may well become a skilled diagnostician. With such an ability, your effectiveness as a self-teacher will be improved.

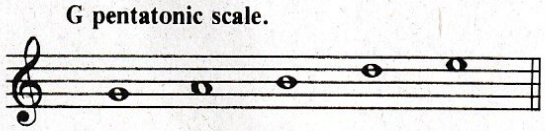
As a diagnostician, you won't have to depend solely on the next page of your method book to dictate what you're supposed to practice, and how you are supposed to accomplish it. Do it yourself: Do *what* you want *when* you want to do it, and enjoy your accelerated improvement.

**Note of Warning:** Don't slip into quackery. The ailment must be clarified, the solution set out in detail. For instance, don't say, "Ailment: What do you play over a *Cmaj7#11* chord? Cure: Learn to play what you feel." This is the musical equivalent of going to the doctor with a scratched finger and leaving in a body cast. Our discussions of ailments and cures in the next couple of months will give you an idea of how to get your problems straightened out in a direct and concise manner.

**Ailment #1:** "I'm locked into patterns. The minute I learn them they become domineering, and then I'm stuck with them."

**Diagnosis:** The pattern that leads into trouble can also lead out of it—if seen from all possible vantage points. When the pattern is seen in only one of its applications, it can be more of a hindrance than a help. Let's first consider, for example, the *G* pentatonic scale and later a few of its least-veiled faces. Here it is, shown in one octave.

**G pentatonic scale.**



Since it can be played using any of several fingering patterns up and down the fingerboard, for the purposes of this study, play the one that you use most frequently. Later on try using other patterns, and connect them lengthwise on the fingerboard. If you haven't played this scale before, choose a pattern that facilitates your visualization of it.

**Cure #1:** Now set up a vamp (with a friend or a tape recorder) in the most obvious harmonic setting for this scale, *Gmaj7*. Repeat it, but this time use a *G7* chord for the vamp.

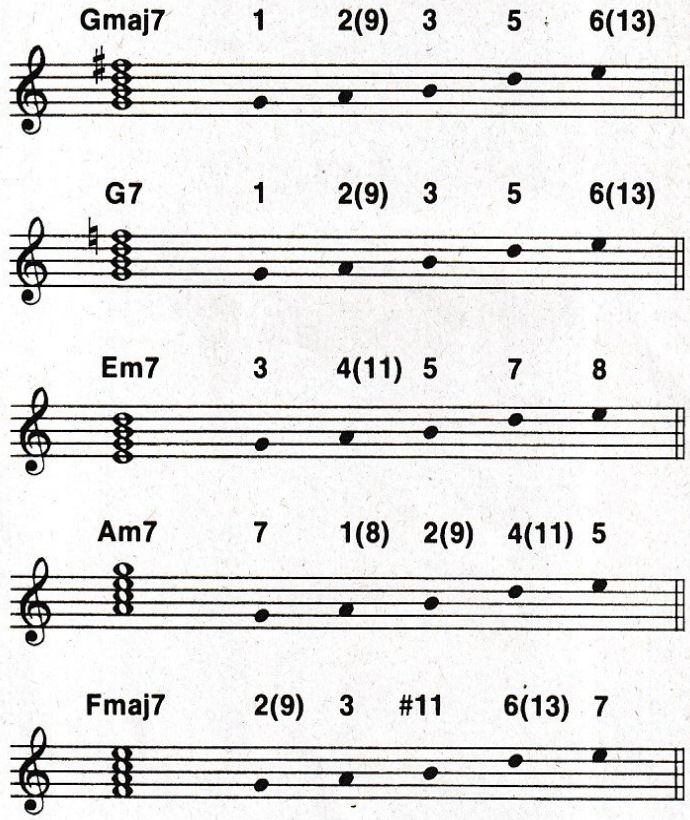
**Cure #2:** Repeat, but this time use an *Em7*.

**Cure #3:** Repeat, using an *Am7*.

**Cure #4:** Repeat, using an *Fmaj7*.

**Cure #5:** Experiment and see if you can find some other places to apply the pattern. For instance, try *Bm6, Bm7, F7* (leave out the *E* in the scale for this application), etc.

Now ask yourself why these applications worked. You will be able to see the answers easily by looking closely at the relationship between each chord and the scale. Here are applications 1 through 4. The scale steps are written above each note; all turn out to be acceptable chordal tones and extensions.

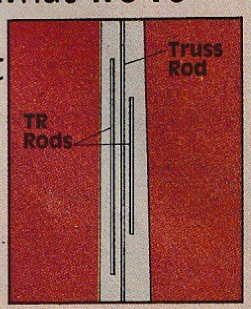



Next month we will continue with Part II of the diagnosis and cure for being locked into habitual patterns. ■

# THE BASSICS

Bass players are demanding more from their instruments and not getting it. That's why the new line of Ibanez basses has been designed from the ground up — for today's bass player. Here's a sample of what we've done:

The most common problems faced by electric bassists are notes that are too dead or too live — virtually every bass has a few.

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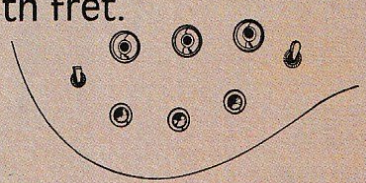
The Ibanez TR Tuned Response Neck is calibrated with tuned steel bars to eliminate these trouble spots. This revolutionary concept (Pat. Pend.) gives you a bass that's smooth and even from the nut to the 24th fret.



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# TOMMY TEDESCO
# STUDIO LOG
## "Montezuma's Revenge"

**Dates:** Dec. 30-31, 1978; Jan. 1, 1979
**Project:** Movie—*Montezuma's Revenge*
**Leader:** Frank Bambina
**Hours worked:** 10
**Minutes actually played:** 10
**Wages earned:** $5.00, two packets of space dust and a Min'd Pick
**Instruments played:** Gibson Throbomatic (with detachable case), Honduras classical (signed by the master craftsman Gonzales Mohino), nose flute, pickeria

TEN DAYS BEFORE this date, I was cooking some ziti when the phone rang. Fortunately, it wasn't Sears calling to repossess my Ultrasimp amplifier, but Frank Bambina—the neo-European composer—asking if I would like to record some background music for an upcoming picture. Thinking that this might be a good way for me to pay for my biweekly lessons with Mel Bay, I promptly agreed that he should send me the charts for the date in *keyonic notation.* (Composers are forever writing things which are unplayable on the guitar, so we studio players have devised a new system of guitar notation whereby certain colors correspond to various notes. For instance, "blue" notes are the funky ones in the first three frets. Black and white notes, however, are only found on the piano and are, therefore, unplayable on the guitar.)

I told Frank that normally it takes me four weeks to *find* my guitar, but that I would, in this case, make a special effort for him since he had, after all, helped me break into the studios in the first place.

The first day of recording I arrived two hours early, managing to get my guitar in tune for the first downbeat. However, about five minutes later, I received an emergency call from another studio whose guitarist was late—so I had to leave to fill in for him.

When I arrived for the second day of recording, they gave me a five-minute part on page one. I wondered how one page of music could last five minutes, while Frank assured me that he had written it for my style of playing. The music example that follows was bars 20-48 of the piece. During one of the breaks I asked the sax player (Slur Samogi) what the tempo was. He said it was slow but that I should play it as fast as I could. I told him I would like to change some parts to make it more playable—if I'd had to play it as written, I'd still be there.

Fortunately, I was able to take some liberties with the tempo. Everything went smoothly, except that, since it was New Year's Eve, I knew I could have been playing that once-in-a-lifetime club date with Guy Brummel at Gumbo's Steak House.

When the date ended, though, I felt artistically rewarded and emotionally satisfied. Everyone looked at their watches for the 20th time and mumbled an enthusiastic "Ya sound good, man," to everyone else.

Now let me show you how I handled this piece:

*Bars 20-21:* "Rare." I played the part exactly as written.

*Bars 22-24:* I tried to figure out what the changes were and interspersed a few grunts of feeling, but the bass player thought I was sick and stopped the tune.

*Bars 28-31:* Followed the dynamics ("con brillo"—played abrasively) but got tripped up in bar 30 by the accidentals.

*Bars 38-39:* I played my own melody.

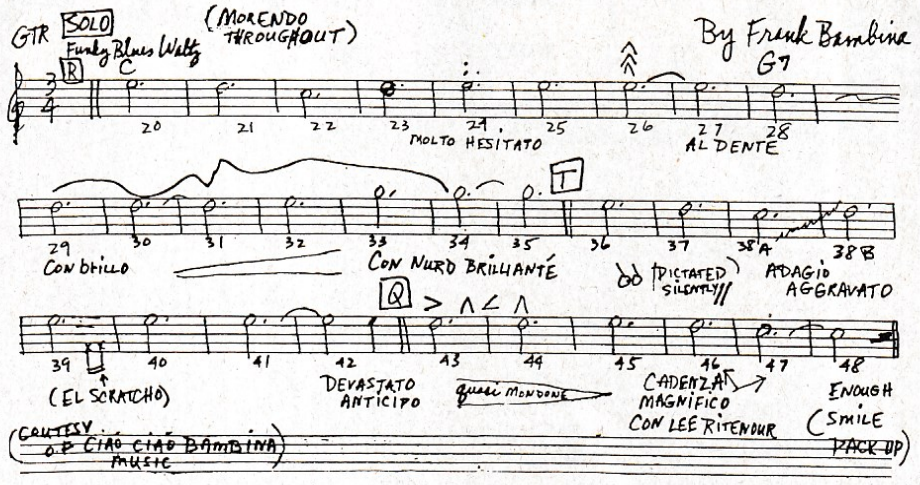
*Bars 46-47:* Drew on my extensive experience in the studios to play a seven-note cadenza with Peruvian trills. At the end of the date everyone stood up and applauded.

There was talk of making an album of this movie soundtrack; the next time you're in an A&P, you might be pleasantly surprised.

* * * *

The above article, written by Denny De Lirio, was sent to *GP* a few months back. The staff enjoyed the tongue-in-cheek approach he used in mimicking my gorgeous writing style. When they forwarded the article to me, I read it and loved it. It reminded me of the 1950s and '60s when kids were copying my mediocre rock and roll licks. Now that I have made the "Big Time" in my journalism career, somebody has copied my mediocre "word" licks. Thank you, Denny. Hope to meet you in the near future.

## "Montezuma's Revenge"

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## GEORGE GRUHN

# AMERICAN GUITAR

## Thoughts On The 1980 Winter NAMM Show

EACH YEAR THE National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) holds two shows for members of the musical instrument industry where manufacturers and wholesalers and in the field can gather to display and sell their wares, inspect and order new products, and make and renew business contacts. The national NAMM show is held in June in a city such as Chicago or Atlanta, and a smaller West Coast show inaugurated a few years ago is held in January in Southern California. I try to attend both of these each year because they give me some new insights into the state of the market and the trends that shape it.

My visit to this year's West Coast show held at the Disneyland Hotel in Anaheim, California, from January 18th through the 20th was no exception. It was undoubtedly the largest or one of the largest West Coast shows to date, both in terms of the number of exhibitors and the amount of space given over to booths and displays. Attendance was also quite good, even on Sunday, the day of the Super Bowl game. Despite these positive aspects, however, there didn't seem to be much buying going on. A few of the booths looked busy, but my overall impression was that business ranged from indifferent to out and out bad. While this would seem to confirm some of the Doomsday-type predictions I've been making in these columns the last couple of years, there were some mitigating factors that would serve to temper such a pessimistic viewpoint.

For one thing, it's very difficult to gauge just how successful an event of this type really is, and it's possible that business was better than it looked. As is the case at most conventions, a lot of business was done after hours at the hotel bar and in hospitality suites and hotel rooms. Also, quite a few representatives of small companies and individual makers didn't have their own booths at the show, so it was difficult to tell whether or not they were getting any worthwhile orders. In addition, there were several factors unrelated to a decline in the market that may have affected sales at this particular show. For instance, January is not a time when most dealers do their heavy ordering, since the months right after Christmas are usually very slow for music stores. Also, the West Coast show traditionally attracts a lot of local gawkers who have some connection with the music business but are not really in a position to do any serious buying. In this respect it's quite different from the national show in June, where there are usually many dealers who've traveled long distances to attend and are prepared to place some substantial orders. Therefore, though the West Coast show would seem to indicate that the market is in something of a slump at present, the national show should provide a more accurate picture of current market conditions.

Business at the show may not have been anything to get excited about, but the products on display were another matter. There were more new models on exhibition and more different instrument companies and independent luthiers represented than at any shows I'd attended previously, and a surprising number of the instruments I saw were professional-level, good-quality guitars. Looking at the vast array, it was hard to realize that less than a decade ago there were only a handful of manufacturers making stage-quality instruments: Martin, Gibson, and—to a lesser extent—Guild were the only important brands among acoustic guitars, and among electrics there were Fender, Gibson, Rickenbacker, Guild, and Gretsch.

With the exception of a few classicals, most Japanese guitars made before the mid '70s were student-grade models, and there weren't many handmade guitars built during this period that would compare favorably to the best factory production models. It was at this time that guitar building in this country reached one of its lowest points. The quality of American guitars in general had been declining steadily since at least the mid '60s, and by the early '70s many companies were turning out the worst quality instruments in their history. (Vintage instruments gained recognition as collector's items largely as a result of this development. They became sought after—not because they were rare, old, or historically significant, but simply because they were so much better than the new ones available at the time.)

The drastic decline of quality that reached its peak in the early '70s was the result of the folk boom which lasted from about '59 to '63-'64, and the rock boom which endured from about '63 to '70. These created an unprecedented demand for fretted instruments, and the small number of manufacturers on the scene at the time were swamped with orders, competition virtually faded away, and the prime concerns became getting the instruments out in a hurry, increasing efficiency, and cutting costs. Under these circumstances, a decline in quality was inevitable, but the demand for instruments so outweighed the supply that sales continued unabated for some time. It was only when the boom ended, demand decreased, and normal competition was restored that the situation took a turn for the better.

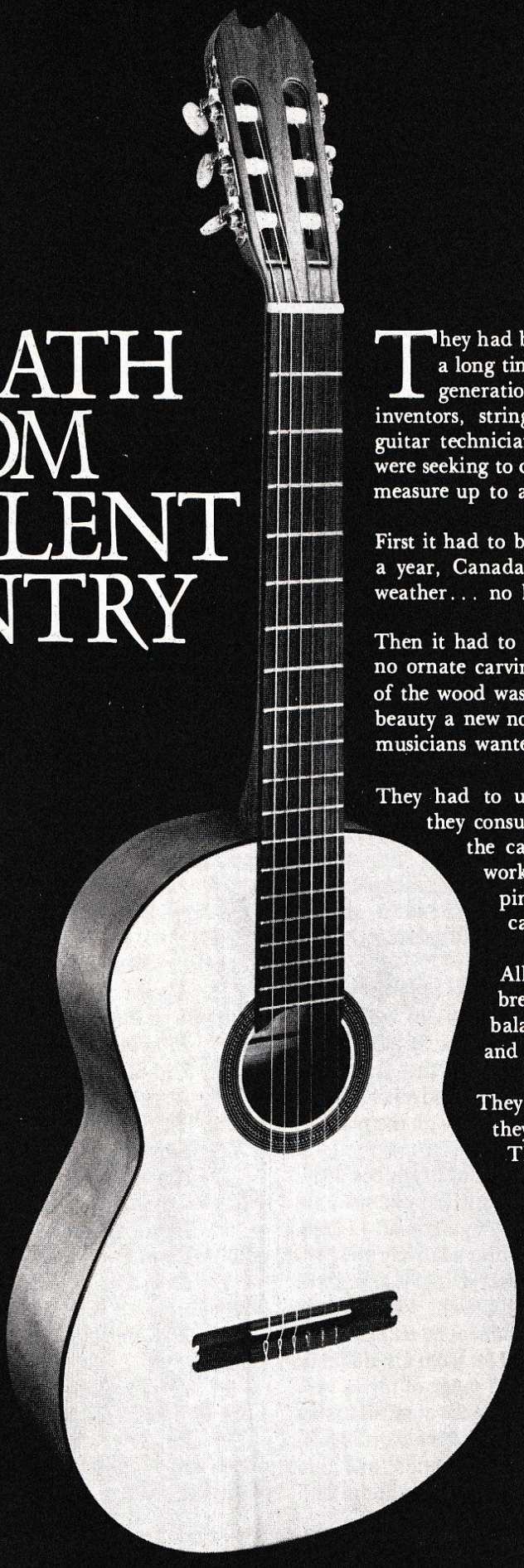
The West Coast NAMM show vividly exemplifies just how much the scene has changed in recent years. Instead of a handful of manufacturers, we now see so many companies and independent luthiers producing such a wide variety of guitars that it would be impossible for one person to keep track of them all. It seems that we are entering a new period characterized by intense competition in the marketplace, and this should bring about some important changes and new trends. Competition does tend to enhance quality, for example, and a great many of the new models introduced at the show were of very good, professional quality. There were numerous Japanese guitars—classics, acoustic flat-tops, electrics, and even state-of-the-art electronic instruments—that compared very favorably with their American competitors. It was also interesting to see that many of the most important manufacturers in Japan are now producing their own designs instead of copies of American models. They are making rapid progress in this area, and in the very near future we may well be seeing American guitar makers copying popular Japanese designs instead of vice versa.

There was also a broad range of American makers producing good instruments—old established companies, large and medium-sized concerns of relatively recent origin (such as Alembic, Kramer, Travis Bean, B. C. Rich, Music Man, Hamer, and others), manufacturers so small they can't really do any sizeable factory-type production, and individual luthiers. Not too long ago, it was fairly easy to keep track of exactly who was making good instruments, and it was reasonable to assume that if you hadn't heard of someone, they probably weren't any good. I now find that there are all sorts of people I've never heard of all over the country that are making remarkably fine instruments.

At present, we are seeing an explosion of guitar technology—both in electronics and design concepts—along with an incredible proliferation of capable makers producing quality guitars. At the same time, unfortunately, the market for fretted instruments actually seems to be shrinking. Although the guitar is so versatile that its place in the music of the foreseeable future seems assured, it is not as prominent in today's music as it was in the '60s and early '70s. Many of the big-name groups today feature singers and dancers, while the musicians are hidden in an orchestra pit or at the back of a darkened stage. This certainly doesn't do much to promote interest in the guitar, and eventually it will have a dampening effect on sales.

In the extremely competitive market that exists today, survival is a struggle, and we're already seeing many guitar makers and retailers cutting back or going out of business entirely. It's a far cry from the '60s, when a music store with a Martin, Gibson, or Fender franchise would almost surely succeed. If you had the product, you didn't need to discount prices, advertise extensively, or even know much about it to sell it. But things are drastically different today. The guitar maker or retailer who wants to make it now would be wise to consolidate his position to increase efficiency while also investigating ways of increasing his adaptability, so that he'll be ready for whatever the future has to offer. Although this is not an easy time, it is a very exciting period historically since we are in the midst of what may be the greatest surge of evolutionary development in the entire history of the guitar. Next month, we'll look at the other evolutionary stages that have shaped the development of the modern guitar to gain some perspective on just how important are the changes going on right now.

# A BREATH FROM THE SILENT COUNTRY



They had been thinking about it for a long time... A silent dream of a new generation of musicians, handy-men, inventors, stringed-instrument makers and guitar technicians. They were all of these and were seeking to create a classical guitar that would measure up to all of their dreams.

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## HERB MICKMAN

# BASS GUITAR FORUM

## One Hundred Bass Lessons

EARLIER THIS YEAR two of my students met briefly in my teaching studio. Tom was there for his first bass lesson, but Tony was taking his last. He had studied for about four-and-a-half years with me, taking one-hour sessions every two weeks.

As I looked through Tony's assignment book, I figured that he had taken over 100 lessons. This really says something for Tony and, I suppose, for the teacher. Tony had come a long way in that time. When he came in for his first lesson, he had the typical share of bad physical habits that most self-taught bassists acquire; the most apparent was playing things the hard way because of no logical fingering system. However, he did know how to read some music in bass clef, so it wasn't like taking an absolute beginner and teaching him note names and other rudiments.

One of the amazing things about our more than 100 lessons was that I don't recall ever having to tell Tony to repeat an assignment because he hadn't practiced. And because of his ambition we were able to cover a tremendous amount of material, ranging from technical studies and reading of all kinds to ear training, chord practice and application, and playing two-octave scales in all keys. I also learned quite a bit teaching him, because he did all the material—and then some. This gave me quite a challenge, because I had to constantly come up with new material for each lesson.

In the last year, we really explored the whole spectrum of songs, chord progressions, chord substitutions, and various improvisational ideas. I found many things hard to explain, but Tony's persistence kept me on my toes, and I came up with logical rules and principles for him to apply to different chordal and melodic situations.

We went through about 20 different books to develop sight-reading and jazz phrasing skills, as well as to build up a repertoire of bass lines to suit all kinds of music. In all, we must have covered about 50 great standards and other jazz tunes, analyzing the chords, inner voices, bass lines, and other aspects. By doing this, Tony also gained some facility on the piano—that certainly can't hurt.

If you've been reading my column since October 1977, you're probably aware that many hours can easily be spent on each page of examples if you play every figure in all 12 keys. Tony played the sequences and lessons on a relatively inexpensive copy of a famous-name electric bass and finally, after three years, he got an instrument worthy of his talent. I was already amazed at his speed; with the new instrument he really flew.

I must say that I've learned an awful lot from my students. Teaching has made me research a broad range of topics very thoroughly, and I have had to practice all kinds of music to stay on top of what I was preaching. I think it's been worthwhile. Tony is now studying orchestration, composition, and film score writing; if he does as well with those studies as he did with the bass, he'll be one hell of a writer.

I've related this story in order to show bassists that hard work and determination will pay off. Dedication, concentration, and lots of practice—and talent—will reap their own benefit.

* * * *

Here is a list of some of the books I have used for teaching. They include methods and studies with material ranging from simple eighth-note rhythms to rock figures, syncopations, and some advanced exercises. Some will have to be ordered from the publisher if you can't find them in a music shop; many larger stores will be able to order them for you, so don't be afraid to ask. It would be a good idea to go through the first four books on the list before attempting the others.

Books 1, 2, and 5 are general methods, while 3 and 4 are straight eighth-note and sixteenth-note studies. Rock figures with a lot of syncopation are included in 5, 6, 12, 15, and 16. Books 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, and 14 are good for jazz reading.

1. *New Method For The Double Bass*, by F. Simandl [Carl Fischer, 62 Cooper Square, New York, NY 10003].
2. *Bob Haggart Bass Method* [Big Three Music, 729 Seventh Ave., New York, NY 10019; and Robbins Music, 1350 Avenue Of The Americas, New York, NY 10019].
3. *First Book Of Practical Studies For Trombone, Book 1* and *2* [Belwin-Mills, 25 Deshon Dr., Melville, NY 11747].
4. *Fun With The Trombone* and *More Fun With The Trombone* [Mel Bay, Pacific, MO 63069].
5. *How To Play The Electric Bass* [Warner Bros., 75 Rockefeller, New York, NY 10019].
6. *Electric Bass Lines, Volume 1, 2, 3, 4,* and *5*, by Carol Kaye [Gwyn Publ., Box 5900, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413].
7. *Rhythms Complete* (bass clef edition) [Chas. Colin, 315 W. 53rd St., New York, NY 10019].
8. *30 Studies In Swing* (bass clef edition) [Sam Fox Music, 1841 Broadway, New York, NY 10023].
9. *Streamlined Etudes For Trombone* [Sam Fox Music].
10. *Ray Brown Bass Method* [Ray Brown Music, Box 270, Hollywood Station, Hollywood, CA 90028].
11. *Dance Band Reading And Interpretations* (bass clef edition) [Sam Fox Music].
12. *Basic Electric Bass, Volume 1, 2, 3, 4,* and *5* [Sam Fox Music].
13. *Jazz Improvisations For Bass Clef Instruments* [Gwyn Publ.].
14. *The Evolving Bassist*, by Rufus Reid [Myriad, Ltd., Lock Box 503, 2138 E. 75th St., Chicago, IL 60649].
15. *Rhythmic Figures For Bassists, Volume 1* (eighth-notes) and *Volume 2* (sixteenth-notes) [Charles Hansen, 1860 West Ave., Miami Beach, FL 33139].

# Next Month: Stanley Clarke

# ROSS VALORY

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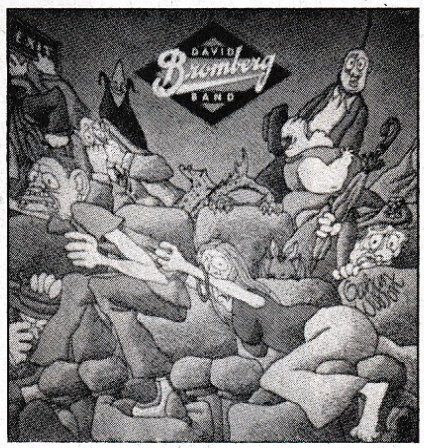
# JAS OBRECHT • TOM MULHERN
# ALBUM NOTES
# JIM SCHWARTZ • TOM WHEELER

## Bromberg & The Rest Of The Band




DAVID BROMBERG'S latest record is funkier than a cardboard suitcase full of IOUs and jammed with terrific music and good-time rowdiness. It's a live LP called *You Should See The Rest Of The Band* (the cover is a Gahan Wilson cartoon), and it's a great party record—a great party, period—showcasing a whole stage full of talent and a much broader array of styles than you'll find on 99% of current releases. Plus, there are juicy tidbits for guitar players throughout—spirited acoustic and electric leads, Wes Montgomery-style octaves, slide, volume swells, call-and-response licks, vocal mimicking, and more.

Put your hand on the radio for "Helpless Blues." It's a slow tune featuring stinging, Freddie King-flavored licks and a funky old tone; its vocal lines are real pulpit-bangers, fading in with a B.B. King falsetto and quivering with get-down righteousness. On "Solid Gone" David plays soulful slide against what sounds like the return trip of a New Orleans dixieland funeral procession, while a version of Albert King's classic killer, "As The Years Go Passing By," is a sombre, minor-key blues that allows Bromberg's fellow guitarist Dick Fegy to step out on electric (Fegy also shines on fiddle, mandolin, and acoustic guitar).

"Yankee's Revenge" is a five-section medley of mountain stompers, jigs, and reels featuring rousing fiddle work (both solos and duets), penny whistle, and Bromberg's dazzling, Doc Watson-style acoustic flatpicking. "Sharon" offers *nasty* slide guitar, a jazzy electric solo against James Brown strut & glide horn patterns, a hyper-jive rap brimming with fun for word freaks (*"so phantasmagorically incredulous, so astronomically superfluous . . . .*") and an irresistible rhythmic groove. If you can keep your seat during this one, see a doctor. Fantasy, F-9590. [TW]

**TREVOR RABIN, "FACE TO FACE."** Rabin's second solo LP, like his first, displays his many instrumental and production talents. With the exception of percussion, everything here is Trevor: guitars, bass, piano, synthesizer, and vocals. His music straddles the realms of rock, pop, and jazz; straight-ahead power rockers "I'll Take The Weight" and "The Wanderer" blend with more melodic, pop-flavored tunes and jazz-rock compositions such as "The Ripper" and "Always The Last One." All nine cuts on the album were written, arranged, and produced by Trevor, too—a real accomplishment, after you listen to the various musical textures and colors he employs throughout. If you haven't seen or heard this young British multi-instrumentalist yet, maybe it's about time you came *Face To Face* with Trevor Rabin. Crysalis, CHR1121. **[JS]**

**DAVID PRITCHARD, "CITY DREAMS."** Lately it seems that more and more jazz and jazz-rock musicians are taking fewer and fewer chances with unusual tonalities or rhythms; instead they rely on formula stylism with increasing frequency. Guitarist David Pritchard, on the other hand, isn't afraid to explore the harmonic and metric byways that are a bit more risky. Gathering together seven outstanding musicians including bassist Larry Klein, pianist Patrice Rushen, drummer Chester Thompson, trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, and saxophonist Charles Orena, he has created five startlingly beautiful songs that are as much a showcase of his songwriting skills in adventurous harmonic contexts as his nimble guitar work. His soulful—almost saddening—electric solo on "Bright Depths" will come close to jerking a tear from you—at least until he soars out of the moody melodies to show a bit of fast fretwork. Other highlights of the album are Pritchard's solos on "Hog Futures" and "As Day And Night," and Klein's fretless bass leads on "Black And White." Inner City (423 W. 55th St., New York, NY 10019), IC 1070. **[TM]**

**JOSEPH BACON, "GUITAR MUSIC OF VILLA-LOBOS."** When the prolific Brazilian guitarist/composer Heitor Villa-Lobos died in 1959, he left about 2,000 works behind him. The dozen performed with stunning clarity by Joseph Bacon on this album are like well-prepared appetizers; they leave you wanting more. Most striking are his renderings of Etude No. 7 with its long, gliding runs, heavy chromaticism, and expansive dynamics; and Prelude No. 3 with its melodies performed in a harp-like, relaxed style. If you're a fan of well-executed modern classical guitar, you'll probably leave this record on your turntable for a few days just so that you can catch little bits of this LP each time you walk by. 1750 Arch (1750 Arch St., Berkeley, CA 94709), S-1771. **[TM]**

**JOHN HAMMOND & THE NIGHTHAWKS, "HOT TRACKS."** Veteran blues preserver and master guitarist John Hammond strapped on an electric for these ten tunes, and with a careful ear for authenticity he demonstrates the range of the instrument in a blues environment, from the drone chords often used by John Lee Hooker to the rousing slide found in his Elmore James-style version of "Sweet Home Chicago." Joining Hammond is a tight, four-man band comprised of guitarist Jimmy Thackery, bassist Jan Zukowski, drummer Pete Ragusa, and a harmonicist extraordinaire, Mark Wenner. High-point guitar performances can be found in their renditions of John Lee Hooker's "Sugar Mama," which intersperses electrified country blues licks with a hot lead solo, and Howlin' Wolf's "Howling For My Darling." An added treat is a copy of Chuck Berry's classic, "Nadine." The easily listenable tracks on this LP sound very close to the music frequently performed inside the downtown blues clubs of Chicago, Detroit, Oakland, and other major cities. Vanguard, 79424. **[JO]**

**ROY LONEY AND THE PHANTOM MOVERS, "OUT AFTER DARK."** The gutsy, late-'50s-and early-'60s-style rock and roll on this LP evokes memories of vintage Stones (a la *Aftermath*), Frank Zappa, Chuck Berry, and the reverberating vocal quality inherent in much of that era's music. Speedy chording prevails as guitars often trade licks with the keyboards. Guitarists James Ferrell and Larry Lea provide most of the spirited, well-timed lead and rhythm work over Loney's expressive singing and occasional strumming. Elements of New Wave also make themselves heard on a few of the album's 12 cuts. This band's forte, however, is straight-ahead rock and roll, and most of the entertaining material on *Out After Dark* features just that. Solid Smoke (Box 22372, San Francisco, CA 94122), 9001. **[JS]**

*Continued*

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## ALBUM NOTES

**CHEAP TRICK, "DREAM POLICE."** There's little question that Rick Nielsen is a brilliant rock rhythm guitarist, and here he outdoes himself while keeping up with—and often leading—the band's maniacal pace. Although his style fuses elements including Chuck Berry licks, Pete Townshend-type suspended chords, Marc Bolin/T-Rex riffs, and Beatles "Last night I said these words"-type things, there are no overkills in the guitar solo department; most passages are short, packed with energy, and designed to heighten the music's frantic drama. On "Voices" Rick plays rhythm on an acoustic and then performs an electric part that sounds suspiciously like a pedal steel. The guitar tour-de-force, though, comes when he pulls out all stops for the headphone-shattering second half of "Need Your Love." Tom Petersson's bass playing is strong throughout, especially on "I Know What I Want" and Nielsen's haunting anthem to the spirit of youth, "Gonna Raise Hell." Epic, 35773. **[JO]**

**RONNIE MONTROSE, "GAMMA 1."** Ronnie's superb electric guitar playing is no stranger to rock listeners. With his new band Gamma, he embarks on a musical journey taking full advantage of modern recording technology. The mix of vocals, guitar, synthesizer, bass, and drums is great, with all instruments having an out-front feel. Whether he's pulling off a blistering solo or adding subtle, arpeggiated touches to a tune, Montrose directs his playing to the heart of the music. Some of his best work can be found on "Razor King," "Solar Heat," and "Ready for Action"; on the latter his guitar speaks in a way reminiscent of Pete Townshend's on "My Generation" (the *Live At Leeds* version). Ronnie's interpretive power, skill with vibrato, and sense of composition are clearly evident throughout, making *Gamma 1* a fitting alpha of his new voyage through progressive rock. Elektra, 6E-219. **[JS]**

**LARRY CORYELL, "RETURN."** Clean as a whistle would be one of the best descriptions of Larry Coryell's electric guitar work on this jazz-R&B-rock disc, which features a sextet of up-tempo, highly melodic tunes (half of which were penned by Coryell). Bassist Chris Brubeck lays down a bottom end so solid that it will hit you like an elbow in the stomach; his brothers Darius and Dan, on piano and drum, respectively, and percussionist Ray Mantilla complete a tightly knit ensemble that sets up a rhythmic and colorful backdrop for Coryell's solos. "Threee Mile Island" has a funky, infectious beat that lets you tap your toe as Larry double-picks multiple subdivisions, covering almost every part of his fingerboard in the process. Al DiMeola and Paco de Lucia's "Mediterrean Sundance/Entre Dos Aguas" features Coryell playing two guitar parts—one electric, one acoustic—in countermelodies and unison runs, while the rest of the group keeps the harmonies moving at a clip. Vanguard (71 W. 23rd St., New York, NY 10010), VSD-79426. **[TM]**

**PETER BERKOW, "BOOTLEG DEMO."** The first side of this LP, called "This Side," mainly features rhythm accompaniment for Zappa-esque spoken/sung lyrics concerning some of the oddities of everyday life. Guitar freaks be patient: Side two, a.k.a. "That Side," is chock-full of hot licks. "Spin The Globe" has a couple of extended solos flavored with wah-wah, parallel octave lines, and some sky-high screechers. A shuffling jazzy feel is imparted to the medium-tempo final track, "No Matter What," by far the mellowest song on the album. Its solos are short, sweet, and (most important) fun to listen to—just the right finish to a fun LP. Such A Deal Records (Box 4131, Chico, CA 95927), 131313. **[TM]**

**DOC & MERLE WATSON, "LIVE & PICKIN'."** From a master picker and his gifted progeny comes a live album containing Watson's usual assortment of unusually fine music. Blues, country, bluegrass, and ballad forms are reborn through the skillful acoustic guitar and banjo playing of Doc and Merle. Flashy instrumentals such as "Big Sandy/Leather Britches" combine with Merle's provocative slide work and Doc's soulful yodeling on "Daybreak Blues" in this showcase of how acoustic country guitar can and should be played. Non-stop enjoyment for the listener through all 11 cuts is guaranteed; if you don't like it, you ain't human. United Artists, UA-LA943-H. **[JS]**

**BAIRD HERSEY AND THE YEAR OF THE EAR, "HAVE YOU HEARD?"** Except for a few spots, Baird Hersey's jazzy electric guitar lines are hard to pick out among this LP's enormous horn section. His approach is to blend with the timbres of the 13-piece entourage to create thick textures that often disguise any semblance of picked strings. Hersey's use of electronic effects and a guitar synthesizer is well-illustrated on "The Prince," a pulsating, almost trance-inducing eight-and-a-half minute song that lets the guitarist/leader cut loose in a series of tonalities that may leave you scratching your head in wonder. The music is unusual, the guitar work tasty, and the album is certainly unique in today's jazz field. Arista/Novus, AN 3016. **[TM]**

**ROBIN TROWER, "VICTIMS OF THE FURY."** From the first screaming notes of the blues solo opening, this LP is pure Trower, complete with Bill Lordan's pounding drums, James Dewar's throbbing bass and unmistakable vocals, and Robin's intense, heavier-than-plutonium guitar. Rather than being full of flash solos (although they do occasionally occur, as in "Madhouse" and "Jack And Jill"), Robin builds his playing around carefully constructed rhythmic passages that blend dreamlike chordal textures with single-string runs. There are Hendrix-inspired passages in Robin's work, most noticeably in the opening chords and fluid leads of "Roads To Freedom," the start of "Only Time," and the cut "Into The Flame" (shades of Jimi's "Voodoo Chile"); still, Trower seems more firmly on his own ground than ever before. Fade-outs at the ends of several tracks suggest that many of the tunes were cut short and could be in-concert jammers. Chrysalis, 1215. **[JO]**

**BOB WELCH, "THE OTHER ONE."** Rock music isn't just strong power chords and slick, loud leads—at least it isn't for Bob Welch. The ten songs that make up this LP contain both, but in the artful hands of Welch, rock transcends commonality. His solos, often containing doubled lines and multi-layered guitar harmonies (with the able assistance of guitarist Todd Sharp), are short yet meaningful, rhythmically complementing while simultaneously guiding vocal and instrumental directions. Everything fits musically, making *The Other One* another one you might like. Capitol, SW-12017. **[JS]**

**JOHN SCOFIELD, "WHO'S WHO?"** Various musical personas, each reflecting John's approach to electric and acoustic guitar, make their presences known on this LP's six cuts. Improvisational and mainstream jazz, blues, and jazz-rock styles blend together, yet retain their own unique identities through Scofield's clever and artful picking. His single-line runs speak of an interpretive power that plays notes, not for their own sake, but to bolster the song. There is no evidence of a lack of comping skill, either; John leaves plenty of room for the bass, keyboards, and saxophones to speak their minds. After listening to this album, it's certain you will remember who John Scofield is. Arista/Novus, AN 3018. **[JS]**

**BRUCE COCKBURN, "DANCING IN THE DRAGON'S JAWS."** Canadian multi-instrumentalist and acoustic fingerstylist Bruce Cockburn's latest album features eight original tunes ranging from jazz-rock and folk to ballad and pop styles. From the lilting calypso feel in "Creation Dream" and the haunting beauty of "Badlands Flashback" to the toe-tapping rhythm in "Northern Lights" and the bluesy, funk emphasis of "After The Rain," this LP conveys Bruce's eclectic and well-honed instrumental and vocal talents. You'll also like Robert Boucher's bass work—the level is mixed high, and some very creative lines work their way into many of Cockburn's tunes. Millenium (dist. by RCA), BXL1-7747. **[JS]**

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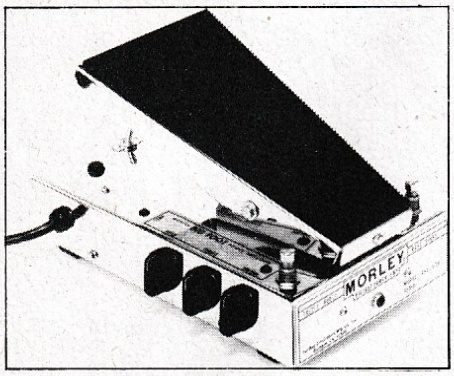
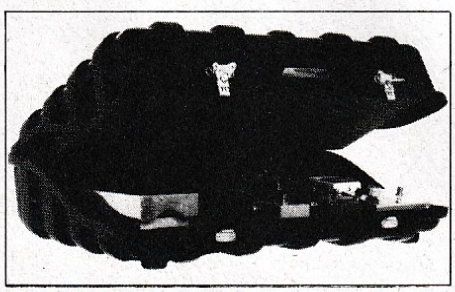
**FOOT-CONTROLLED AMP.** Morley's Bigfoot amp weighs only 8 lbs, and can be placed next to other effects on a pedalboard; it is the same size as other Morley pedals. Bigfoot produces 25 watts RMS into any speaker system rated at 4 ohms or greater. Its photoelectric footpedal controls the unit's output volume, while input level, treble, and bass are governed by knobs located on the side. Footswitches on the AC-powered amp activate bass and treble boosters. Short-




circuit protection is built-in. Bigfoot sells for $289.95 (cabinets with Electro-Voice or Celestion speakers, as well as cabinets without speakers are offered as options) from Morley, 6855 Vineland Ave., North Hollywood, CA 91605.

**STRAP RETAINERS.** Three layers of rubber and two layers of nylon are fused together to form a Rubber, a washer-like retainer designed to keep guitar straps from falling off their instruments. The Rubber is placed on the endpin after the strap, and it snugly holds the strap in place by gripping the pin. No modification of the instrument is necessary, and there are no metal parts. The price for each retainer is $1.00; custom printing of store or band names can be done for an additional (one-time) tooling charge of $25.00. Roche-Thomas, Box 643, Highland, CA 92346.

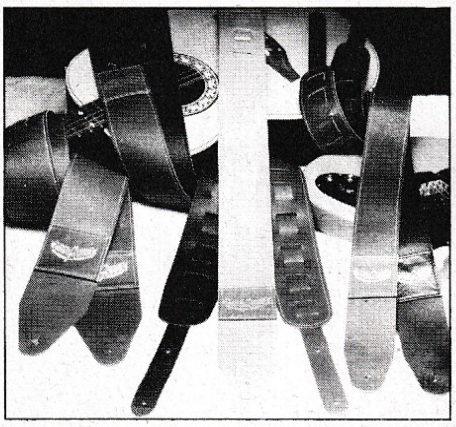
**PEDALBOARD.** Intended to organize effects and expedite setup, the ProCo Pedalboard is made of molded ABS plastic



with heavy-duty closure hardware. The internal dimensions of the Pedalboard are 24″x16-1/2″x15-1/4″. Snap-on fasteners make removal and replacement of effects easy. ProCo Sound, Inc., 135 E. Kalamazoo Ave., Kalamazoo, MI 49006.

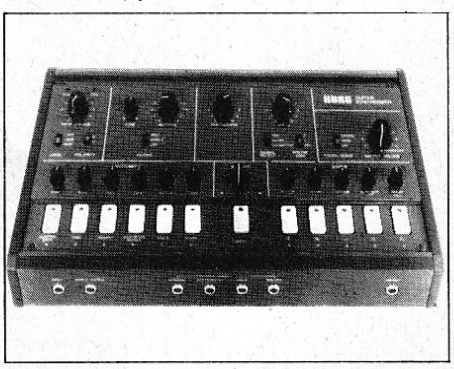
**TWO-WAY CABINET.** Designed for full-range sound reproduction for instruments or vocals, the PBL-90 fiberglass speaker system from Community Light & Sound features an integral high-frequency horn and low-frequency speaker. An L-pad power control and input connectors, casters, and handle are recessed for protection. Community Light & Sound, Inc., 5701 Grays Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19143.

**COWHIDE STRAPS.** Silver Eagle Designs's Minstrel and Minstrel Deluxe straps are each available in 2-1/2″, 3″, and 3-1/2″ widths and feature pick pockets. The Minstrel is a two-piece, all-leather strap with leather adjustment pieces. The Minstrel Deluxe is made of leather with 100% braided cotton trim. All stitching is nylon; no metal



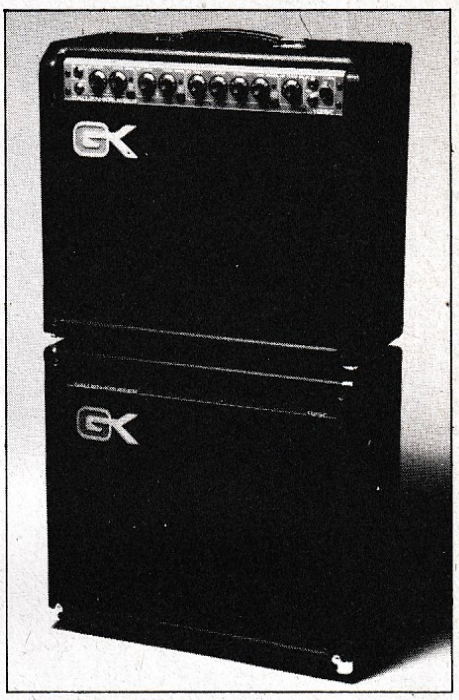
parts are used. Available colors are tan, black, red-brown, medium-brown, and dark brown. Prices range from $14.50 to $19.50. Silver Eagle Designs, 14850 Oxnard St., Van Nuys, CA 91411.

**GUITAR SYNTHESIZER.** Korg's X-911 monophonic guitar synthesizer features five mixable synthesizer voices with variable filter controls, six mixable instrument voices, and fuzz processing. An octave switch, a direct output, and foot-switchable infinite sustain, interval changing, portamento, and synthesizer cancel are included.



No modification to the guitar is required. The price is $550.00 from Unicord, 89 Frost St., Westbury, NY 11590.

**AMP AND CABINET.** Gallien-Krueger's 112SC is a 75-watt amplifier with an integral single G12-80 Celestion speaker; an extension cabinet called the 112EC is available for added sound dispersion. A




separate master volume control is included on each of the 112 SC's two channels; a switch allows the two channels of the amp to be run in series for additional sustain. Active treble, high midrange, low midrange, and bass controls are also included. A footswitch with LED function indicators is used to switch the guitar's signal between channels. Reverb and an effects loop input/output section are also included on the 75-watt RMS amp, which measures 20-1/2″x18-1/4″x9-1/2″; the 112 EC extension speaker cabinet is the same size and weighs 36 lbs. Gallien-Krueger, 504B Vandell Way, Campbell, CA 95008.

**HANDMADE ACOUSTICS.** The Lane Moller custom-made Moller Dreadnaught and OO-M are both offered in 6- and 12-string models with Moller Hinged-Cantilever bracing and German spruce tops. Brazilian rosewood is used for the bodies, binding, and bridges. Flamed maple and mahogany are used for the necks, and ebony fingerboards with a choice of inlays are included. The scale length of the pair of acoustics is 25-19/32″. Fingerboard width, string spacing, and neck shaping can be specified on a custom basis. Other options include abalone binding, an oval soundhole, and a built-in Frap/Nasty Cordless pickup and wireless transmitter system. Base price for the guitars is $960.00 from Lane Moller Custom Guitars, Box 4131, Chico, CA 95927.

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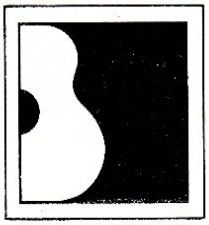
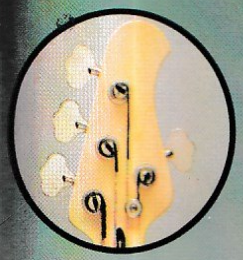


# THIS MONTH'S ADVERTISERS

**In this, *Guitar Player*'s April 1980 issue, 127 different companies are presenting their latest products. Don't hesitate to contact them if you have questions or need more details. They're in *GP* because they care about musicians.**



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